

The Selfish Giant – A Musical

Inspired by Oscar Wilde’s Much-Loved Story

Libretto and Music by John Mills

1) What is ‘*The Selfish Giant – A Musical*’ All About?

Meet Selfie, the Selfish Giant. He has no friends, because he is selfish. He has a beautiful garden, but won’t share it with anyone. Because he is selfish. He won’t let the children play in his garden, because he is selfish. He thinks he is happy, but there’s no happiness and laughter in his life. Because he is selfish.

Meet the children, full of laughter and happiness. Playing, exploring, and learning from the world and from each other. They discover Selfie’s wonderful garden and are delighted to play freely and joyously, ranging widely over the flowerbeds. Sometimes too freely!

Then we have human-eating, fearsome-looking Giants seeking assistance with their tribulations but receiving no help from fellow-giant Selfie. Come, meet the fantastic Winter Characters who transform the garden into a cold Winter wilderness.

Selfie returns from seven years of travelling and frightens the children. He ‘*builds a wall to keep out all*’ from the garden. What are the children learning from this? Will they too become selfish? Will Selfie ever see the need to change behaviour?

‘*The Selfish Giant – A Musical*’ explores these themes in an emotional and entertaining way, through memorable characters and tuneful dance music. A delightful musical suitable for the whole family.

2) Author’s Note

In this musical I have sought to provide an engaging piece of entertainment that explores the consequences of selfishness and loneliness that seem to permeate much of our modern way of life.

I have taken liberties with the original short story by Oscar Wilde. Wilde’s ‘Cornish Ogre’ character has been expanded into a cacophony of giants. The role of Teacher has been enhanced to provide some balance of ‘caring and sharing’ for the children. Winter arrived, with the opportunity to create a feast of Winter Characters for audiences to engage with. The religious references of the original story have been toned down.

3) Note to the Director

Please have fun with this show – which should be very pacey - and find opportunities to engage with the audience wherever possible. For example:

Scene 1 – the Giants can be in amongst the audience threatening to bite their heads off!

Scene 3 & 8 – audience wave flowers to become part of the Giant’s garden in Spring

Scene 5 – Audiences could learn the moves for the Winter Games Opening Ceremony.

Let your imagination go wild with the magical transformation into Winter Scene 6. A real opportunity to do something dazzling and original with the Winter Characters, transforming the whole performance space perhaps?

In the Hoedown Scene 8, the audience could be encouraged to clap or join in with funny dance moves. In the Celebration Dinner scene 9, children might be invited to ‘serve/taste’ the food to the Giants – at a safe distance, of course!

The final scene 11 - the passing of Selfius - lends itself to having a beautiful transformation into an Paradise garden. Perhaps audience members could lay flowers too.

This musical would usually be performed in 1 Act, but if an interval is required, then a break is manageable from end of Scene 5 into Scene 6. Please contact us for more ideas and material to enable this.

Wilde's role has the potential for enhancement by being on stage for much of the time as befits a 'Puppeteer of Emotions'. Sometimes watching, sometimes sitting with the audience, sometimes taking centre stage. Perhaps he's has the starting gun for the Winter Games. Wilde can applaud, cry or laugh to encourage audience participation. Wilde could also take the role of Hoedown Caller. An super opportunity for developing an emotional character for stirring up an audience.

The song 'Lock Winter Into The Giant's Heart' offers a wonderful opportunity for memorable dance and movement.

4) Characters

There are 17 named characters with additional possibilities for a chorus of children and villagers. Many roles are non-gender-specific with simple modifications to the script i.e. 'he' to 'she', 'him' to 'her'. Characters 'age' through the performance.

Selfie/Selfius, the Selfish Giant: A major character. Changes from a youthful, unkempt, gruff and selfish giant into Selfius, an unselfish, caring and gentle 'vegan giant'.

The Other Giants: Could be extreme versions of frightening giants from across the British Isles. They love squishing and eating juicy humans. Have rather disgusting drinking and eating habits.

Gogmagog, the Welsh Giant: (*Pronounced Gomagog*) Ugly, battle-scarred and blooded. Possibly a Welsh accent and an occasional 'eh boyo?'

Cormoran, the Cornish Ogre: Ugly and smelly giant with oversized muscles. Possibly a Cornish accent and an occasional 'ooh arr!'

Finn McCOUL, the Irish Giant: Huge, very ugly and bedraggled giant with dirty bandages over hands. Possibly an Irish accent and an occasional 'begorra!'

Benandonner, Scottish Giant: Ugliest of them all! Oversized ears and magnificent hair. Possibly a Scottish accent and an occasional 'och aye!' and 'laddie' or 'lassie'.

The Winter Characters: All are larger-than-life. Each excels at the different Winter Games.

Bluster-Boy: Whoo Hoo! The organiser of the Winter Games.

Jacko Frost: Cracker Crack! Crispy and lively dancer.

Snowdrift: Gentle, calming and drifting. Shhhhwishhhh twinkle-winkle

Flashy Thunderer: A split personality – as Flash Lightning a jerky, extreme enthusiast. Flicker Flack. As Rumble Thunder - a stomper with a booming delivery. Booom!

Adults and Children:

Wilde, the narrator: A major role. Author and 'Puppeteer of Emotions'. Very, very theatrical. Oscar having grown up.

Teacher: Role-model for 'caring and sharing'. Patient and encouraging.

Hoedown Caller: Jolly sort with a musical lilt to speech. Broad local yokel accent?

Harri (*Harriet or Harry*): Child. Emotional with leadership qualities. Young, then youthful, then a young adult.

Jo (<i>Joseph or Joanne</i>):	Child. A little ‘slow’ in understanding. Plenty of ‘Umm’s’. Young, then youthful, then a young adult.
Nick (<i>Nicola or Nicholas</i>):	Child. Rather nervous disposition. Young, then youthful, then a young adult.
Oscar:	Wilde as a youngster. Theatrical, a bit of a ‘wild-child’! Young, then youthful, then a young adult.
Small Child Puppet:	A featureless universal, neutral, ‘child-of-the-world’ puppet.

5) Performance For Five Performers

‘*The Selfish Giant - A Musical*’ can be performed with as few as five actors: n.b. Marked in square brackets in the script ‘*[to become]*’ refers to such a performance.

Performer 1:	Selfie/Selfius, the Selfish/Unselfish Giant.
Performer 2:	Cormoran, the Cornish Ogre; Harri; Bluster-Boy
Performer 3:	Finn McCoul, the Irish Giant; Jo; Flashy Thunderer.
Performer 4:	Gogmagog, the Welsh Giant; Wilde; Oscar; Hoedown Caller; Snowdrift; Small Child Puppet.
Performer 5:	Benandonner, the Scottish Giant; Teacher; Nick; Jacko Frost.

Key to characters: (BD) Benandonner; (CR) Cormoran; (FM) Finn McCoul; (GG) Gogmagog; (SF) Selfius; (WI) Wilde; (CH) Children; (HC) Hoedown Caller; (TE) Teacher; (JF) Jacko Frost; (BL) Bluster-Boy; (SD) Snowdrift; (FT) Flashy Thunderer; (SC) Small Child; (HA) Harri; (JO) Jo; (NI) Nick; (OS) Oscar.

6) Stage Set

There are two basic sets: the Garden in Spring and the Garden in Winter. The Spring garden may have more veg than flowers. It could become more beautiful with each iteration until the final ‘Paradise Garden’. Tabs closed might suggest outside the Giant’s castle walls. Stage directions are as if using a proscenium arch.

7) Music

MP3 backing tracks are available, both with and without vocals. A PVG arrangement for 4-piece acoustic band is available. Extracts from ‘*The Selfish Giant – A Musical*’ can be found on our website <https://stuffandnonsensethemusical.com>

8) Synopsis

After being welcomed by Oscar Wilde whose story this is, we are introduced to Selfie, the Selfish Giant in his garden. Selfie is also making preparations for seed-gathering travels. He journeys for seven years, meeting several unsavoury giants on his way. Each of them is in some difficulty and ask Selfie for help but he refuses each of them. They get together to sing **He’s A Selfish Giant**.

Wilde – the ‘puppeteer of emotions’ - recalls his memories of childhood, singing **I Remember Laughter**. His schooldays were a particular delight especially when school was over and the children could play in the Giant’s garden and sing **So Happy Are We Here**.

Selfie returns from his travels and sings **I’m A Selfish Giant**. The children are frightened and hide. The Giant finds his garden has been damaged and complains angrily that he only been away for seven years. Selfie built a huge wall with a sign saying, ‘Stay Away.’

Outside the garden the children have **Nowhere to Play**. Oscar – Wilde as a child - promises to try and find somewhere safe to play away that’s far away from Selfie. The sadness of the children is echoed by Wilde who sings **I Remember Sadness**.

The garden itself grew sad and cold without the children. But it did become a favourite place for Winter characters to visit ... and stay. Bluster-Boy – North Wind - asked Selfie if they could hold their Winter Games in the garden, but was answered with an emphatic ‘No!’ So Bluster-Boy, Jack Frost, Snowdrift and Flashy

Thunderer settle into the garden and sing **So Happy Are We Here**. Oscar berates the Giant but is shooed away by the Winter characters.

Winter has come to stay. The Winter Characters dance and sing **Lock Winter Into The Giant's Heart**. Many years pass. Selfie, now older, is increasingly lonely. He remembers himself as a youngster, singing and dancing, and sings **I'd Dream Of A World**. Selfie realises how foolish and selfish he has been and resolves to change his ways. There's been *'too much me and not enough us!'* and decides to change his name to Selfius.

Then one morning, Selfius is woken by the sound of children's laughter. Older now, they have found a way back into the garden and sing **So Happy Are We Here**. Selfius goes out to meet them, but they are frightened and hide. All, that is, except a small child who is crying and cannot get into the garden. Selfius helps the child and in return receives a hug and special kiss. The other children, on seeing Selfius and the small child together, come out from hiding and joyfully dance **Shake-A-Little-Leg**. Selfius invites everyone to enjoy his garden whenever they wish to. He also offers to teach the children all about gardening. Perhaps unwisely, he invites the Giants to a Celebration Dinner, with mixed results!

Many years pass and Selfius has become very old and frail. He shuffles into the garden with the children, now grown into young adults. With great joy he sees his special Small Child again. But as he gets closer, he sees bandages on the child's hands and feet. Selfius is very angry, but is calmed by the Small Child who says, *'Once you let me play in your beautiful garden. Now it is time for you to come and play in mine. It is a Paradise just like yours.'*

The **Finale** begins with Selfius singing haltingly **I Dream Of A World**. The Small Child tells Selfius that his time has come. When the children came to play in the garden that day, they found Selfius lying peacefully under a tree covered in flowers. Wilde reprises **I Remember Sadness**, then the children sing **So Happy Is He Now** as a hymn of remembrance. The music continues to build with a reprise of **My Memories Are With Me**. An uplifting ending is brought to a joyful conclusion with **Don't Be Like The Giant** as a caution against being selfish and lonely. *'You'd better watch out!'*

9) Musical Numbers and ScenesScene 1 The Giant's Garden in Spring**#01 He's A Selfish Giant!***Selfie and Giants***#02 Seven Years Passed***Selfie and Giants*Scene 2 From Schoolroom to Garden**#03 I Remember Laughter***Wilde and Children*Scene 3 The Giant's Garden In Spring**#04 So Happy Are We Here***Children***#05 I'm A Selfish Giant!***Selfie and Children*Scene 4 Outside the Castle Walls**#06 Nowhere to Play***Children***#07 I Remember Sadness***Wilde and Children*Scene 5 The Giant's Garden in Winter**#08 Winter Games Fanfare****#09 So Happy Are We Here***Winter Characters*Scene 6 The Giant's Garden in Winter**#10 Lock Winter Into The Giant's Heart***Winter Characters*Scene 7 On the Giant's Castle Walls**#11 I'd Dream Of A World***Selfie and Giants*Scene 8 The Giant's Garden In Spring**#12 So Happy Are We Here - Reprise***Children and Small Child***#13 Shake A Little Leg!***Dance Caller, Teacher, Children and Selfius*Scene 9 The Celebration Dinner*Selfius and the Giants*Scene 10 Outside The Castle Walls*Wilde, Jo, Harri, Selfius, Small Child*Scene 11 A Paradise Garden**#14 Finale – I Dream Of A World; I Remember Sadness; So Happy Is He Now;
My Memories Are With Me; Don't Be Like The Giant***Company*