

The Selfish Giant – A Musical

Inspired by Oscar Wilde’s Much-Loved Story

Libretto and Music by John Mills

Scene 1 The Giant’s Garden in Spring - #01 He’s A Selfish Giant! #02 Seven Years Passed

(House tabs closed. Stage is set as garden in Spring. A stuffed, heavy rucksack and a walking pole are on the stage. WILDE enters in front of tabs.)

WILDE

Welcome, welcome, one and all, short and tall, young and older, timid and bolder, to our telling of ‘The Selfish Giant’! Let me introduce myself. I’m Wilde! Not ‘wild’ as in a wild animal. Or ‘wild’ as in very angry. Or ‘whiled’ as in wasting away my time. My name is Wilde. Oscar Wilde. With an ‘e’ on the end. W .. I .. L .. D .. E! I’m a writer, a writer of made-up stories. A ‘Puppeteer of Emotions’. And this story – The Selfish Giant - is a special favourite of mine. Could it be a true story? Come and ask me after the show! Welcome, to The Selfish Giant. And you’d better watch out! Ha, ha, ha!

(House tabs open. WILDE exits [to become GOGMAGOG]. A youthful, unkempt SELFIE enters noisily with oversized tray of gardening paraphenalia. On the tray is a doll hidden inside a hanky.)

SELFIE

(Speaking to the AUDIENCE to threaten children)

Grrr, humans! Grrr, Mummies. Grrr! Daddies! Grrr, bony boysies and chewy girlies. Yum, yum, yum in my tum, tum, tum! Grrr! *(Pause)* Guess what my hobby is? No, it’s more than a hobby. Guess what my passion is? Can’t guess? I love to garden! Flowers and veg. Mostly veg. I love it. And those crunchy little humans go down really well on a plate piled high with veg! Over-boiled cabbages, stringy beans, shrivelled figs and cannonball turnips. Lovely! Something crunchy to get my teeth into. Grrr! Forgot to mention my favourite ... sprouts!

(Farting sound effect. Sniffs the air and enjoys it too much!)

I garden all the time. Except when I’m cooking ... those teensy humans! Mummy Giant gardened too, but, ‘Don’t play in the garden, you might damage it’, she’d say. I’d protest, ‘But I want to play in the garden!’ And Mummy Giant would come back at me, ‘Too much ‘I’ and not enough ‘us’!’ Always telling me what I could and couldn’t do! Grrr! *(Pause. Sigh)* I’m Selfie. And, yes, I’m a Selfish Giant! Grrr! So don’t try and cross me. Or else! Grrr! What do you mean, ‘You’re not big enough to be a giant!’?

(Unwraps doll in handkerchief and gleefully bites off its head.)

Elevenes! I’ll leave some for later.

(Wraps up in the doll and packs it into the stuffed rucksack)

My garden belongs to me. My veg patch. My orchard. My flowerbeds. All mine!! No-one helped. Don’t need any help. My garden’s full of smells too. Nice smells on that side. Pongy ones on this side. My favourites are here!

(Puts on rucksack, picks up walking pole, starts trudging.)

But I want some more veg varieties with even smellier smells, So, I’m gonna hike these lands till I find what I’m looking for. By myself. Just me! Grrr! I’m Selfie, the Selfish Giant!

(Comes halt and takes off rucksack.)

Aching feet. Aching legs. Aching arms. Tired back. What a weight! Straps cutting into my shoulders.

(Soothing and stretching shoulders. Rests, checks inside the rucksack.)

Ought to check my equipment. Walking pole to stop me from tripping, check. Bolster and mallet to carve my way through gorges, check. Bandages and water in case of an accident, check. Earplugs to help me sleep at night, check! *(Pause)* Not many travellers. Did meet some giants though. Grrr! Bloodthirsty lot they were! Even more bloodthirsty than me! Grrr! First was the really stupid Gogmagog ...

GOGMAGOG

(Enters noisily, in considerable pain.)

Help me! I’m Gogmagog, the Welsh Giant. I’ve been in a fight over some juicy little humans. Managed to grab an arm and a leg! But I’m badly hurt. I need some bandages and water. Can you help me?

SELFIE

(Looks in rucksack, pulls out a bandage.)

I might need it! No, can't help you, Gogmagog! I'm Selfie, the Selfish Giant!

GOGMAGOG

Well. That's that, then! Don't come to me if you ever need any help. I've nothing else to say to you ... you ... Selfish Giant!

(GOGMAGOG grumbles and sulks, moaning and in pain)

SELFIE

Second, there was the oafish giant Cormoran ...

(CORMORAN enters, exhausted, has a bad back)

CORMORAN

Help me. I'm Cormoran, the Cornish Giant! I need to hurl stepping stones across the bay to squish and flatten crunchy little humans. But I'm so tired and have a really, really bad back. Can you help me? Lend me your walking pole as a lever!

SELFIE

It's mine, you might break it. I need it for my journey. And, Cormoran, pooh, you're really sweaty-stinky!

CORMORAN,

Well, 'That's that!' then. Don't come to me if you ever need any help. I've nothing else to say to you ... you ... Selfish Giant!

(Moves away and sulks)

SELFIE

Third, the dense Irish Giant, Finn McCoul ...

(FINN MCCOUL enters, exhausted, with hands in huge bandages)

FINN MCCOUL

You look like a helpful giant, can you help me? Just for a short time. Nothing much. I'm trying to chisel that pile of rocks into a giant bridge to cross the seas. I could ask one of my Giant neighbours ... but they're away at the funfair. Playing 'Splat The Kid!' Great fun. My fingernails are blunt from all the scratching. Have you got a bolster and mallet I could use?

SELFIE

(Looks into rucksack and pulls out a bolster and mallet.)

You'll wear them out. I'll need them for cutting my way through rocks. And ... pooh, pooh, poo-ey Finn ... you're even more sweaty-stinky than Gogmagog!

FINN MCCOUL

Well, 'That's that, then! Don't come to me if you ever need any help. I've nothing else to say to you ... you ... Selfish Giant!

(Sniffs under armpits, shakes head as if nothing wrong with smell, shaking painful hands, moves away, starts making baby crying noises.)

SELFIE

(SELFIE exaggerates putting in of earplugs, shouting)

And that sappy, tormented, dim Scottish Giant, Benandonner ...

BENANDONNER

(Enters, covering ears to hide the baby cries, and shouts)

I am Benandonner, the Scottish Giant. Have you any earplugs to shut out the noise of that wretched giant baby? Where is it? I'm gonna bite it's head off if it don't stop it's screaming!

(No reaction from SELFIE, so BENANDONNER moves closer.)

Laddie! Earplugs! Shut out the crying!

SELFIE

No! They'd get all sticky with your earglobs. Yuk! Wouldn't want to put them in my ears!

BENANDONNER

Well, 'That's that!, then. Don't come to me if you ever need any help. I've nothing else to say to you ... you ... Selfish Giant!

(Music starts for #01 He's A Selfish Giant. All GIANTS come together.)

SELFIE

Ha! They all wanted something! But they got nothing from me.

GIANTS

You're a selfish Giant!

GOGMAGOG

It would have been so easy to let me have some bandages!

CORMORAN

It would have been so easy to let me use your walking pole!

FINN MCCOUL

It would have been so easy to let me use your bolster and mallet.

BENANDONNER

It would have been so easy to let me borrow your earplugs.

GIANTS

You're a selfish, selfish Giant!

HE HASN'T GOT A LOT TO SAY.

CORMORAN

HE HASN'T GOT THAT MUCH TO DO.

FINN MCCOUL

BUT FRIGHTEN LITTLE CHILDREN AWAY.

GOGMAGOG

OR WRESTLE WITH A DRAGON OR TWO.

BENANDONNER

HE HASN'T GOT A LOT TO SAY.

CORMORAN

NO HE HASN'T GOT THAT MUCH TO DO.

FINN MCCOUL

BUT EAT THEM JUICY HUMANS EACH DAY.

GOGMAGOG

OR SCARE A LITTLE PRINCESS OR TWO

SELFIE

I'M A SELFISH GIANT.

CARES FOR NO-ONE BUT HIMSELF.

I'M A SELFISH GIANT.

I DOESN'T CARE FOR YOU

AND I DOESN'T CARE FOR HE,

I'M JUST ABOUT AS SELFISH AS CAN BE!

SELFIE

Not much!

SELFIE

Very little!

SELFIE

Squishy, juicy!

SELFIE

(Squealing) Don't eat me!

ALL

HE'S A SELFISH GIANT.

CARES FOR NO-ONE BUT HIMSELF.

I'M/HE'S A SELFISH GIANT.

HE DOESN'T CARE FOR YOU

AND HE DOESN'T CARE FOR ME,

HE'S JUST ABOUT AS SELFISH AS CAN BE!

BENANDONNER

HE'S A REALLY MEAN AND SELFISH GIANT. (*SELFIE echo in 1st person*)

CORMORAN

HE'S NEVER DONE A GOOD THING IN HIS LIFE. (*SELFIE echo in 1st person*)

FINN MCCOUL

HE'S GOT NO TIME FOR ANY OTHER GIANT. (*SELFIE echo in 1st person*)

GOGMAGOG

HE'S GOT NO ONE TO SHARE IN HIS LIFE.

SELFIE

I DON'T NEED NO SHARING!

SELFIE

I'M SUCH A HAPPY CREATURE
HAPPY IN MY SOLITARY WORLD

SUCH AN UNHAPPY CREATURE,
LONELY IN HIS SOLITARY WORLD.

I'M SUCH A HAPPY CREATURE
HAPPY IN MY SOLITARY WORLD

SUCH AN UNHAPPY CREATURE,
LONELY IN HIS SOLITARY WORLD.

SELFIE & GIANTS

I'M/HE'S A SELFISH GIANT.

YOU'D BETTER WATCH OUT

CARE(S) FOR NO-ONE BUT MY/HIMSELF.
I'M/HE'S A SELFISH GIANT
I/HE DOESN'T CARE FOR YOU AND I/HE DOESN'T CARE FOR HE/ME,
I'M/ HE'S JUST ABOUT AS SELFISH AS CAN BE!

DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU!
WATCH OUT!

SELFIE

I'M/HE'S A SELFISH GIANT.
CARES FOR NO-ONE BUT MY/HIMSELF.
I'M/HE'S A SELFISH GIANT
I/HE DOESN'T CARE FOR YOU AND I/HE DOESN'T CARE FOR HE/ME,
I'M/HE'S ABSOLUTELY SELFISH!
I/HE DOESN'T CARE FOR YOU AND I/HE DOESN'T CARE FOR HE/ME,
I'M/HE'S ABSOLUTELY SELFISH! I'M/HE'S COMPLETELY SELFISH!
JUST ABOUT AS SELFISH AS CAN BE!

GIANTS

YOU'D BETTER WATCH OUT
DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU!
WATCH OUT!

ALL

You'd better watch out! Grrrr!

(GOGMAGOG exits [to become WILDE] GIANTS circle SELFIE then turn on the audience)

SELFIE

Seven years all by myself!

(Music starts for #02 Seven Years Passed)

SELFIE

One year passed, felt good all by myself.
A second year flew by, I felt great all by myself!
Years three and four they came and went, I still was strong and free,
And five and six years rushed on by, so happy to be me.
And now I've been away for very nearly seven years,
It's time I stomped my way back home.

GIANTS

One!
Two!
Three! Four!
Five! Six!
Seven!

Back to my garden for a lovely cuppatea ... and a snack!

(Takes a bite of the doll and spits out the bones. Starts to choke and cough. FINN MCCOUL, CORMORAN and BENANDONNER exit grumbling and fist-shaking [to become CHILDREN and TEACHER]. SELFIE studies the half-eaten doll)

SELFIE

Hardly worth the effort, these human snacks. So many tickly bones. Not enough flesh!! Salty blood, yuk! *(Pause)*
Once I've planted my seeds, I might go vegan! 'You ought to give it a try,' Mummy Giant said. 'I don't need telling what to do!!' *(SELFIUS stomps off. Tabs in.)*

Scene 2 From Schoolroom to Garden - #02 I Remember Laughter;

(WILDE enters in front of tabs. N.b OSCAR doesn't enter until later in the scene)

WILDE

Phew, I warned you about him, didn't I? You'd better watch out! Selfie's so selfish, isn't he? Smelly too! Those other giants aren't any better. Much too big, and much too hungry for my liking! *(Pause)* I would have been about eight when I first came across that Selfish Giant. Ooh! Shivers down my spine. I still remember it, like it was yesterday ... *(Looks around)* He lived here ... in this ginormous Castle . A ginormous giant's castle .. with a beautiful garden. Truly beautiful. I remember the bone-cold, freezing Winter ... ah, yes ... and that Small Child ... But don't rush ahead, Wilde 'with an 'e'! All that's to come.

(Music begins for #02 I Remember Laughter)

For now, I remember happy times, laughter and games, tumbling down hillsides, exploring forests ...

WILDE

I REMEMBER, YES I REMEMBER LAUGHTER,
I REMEMBER HAPPY, HAPPY DAYS GONE BY. Yes I do!
I REMEMBER SUCH HOURS OF HAPPINESS WHEN I WAS A CHILD.

WILDE

CHILDREN *(appear 'angelically' in front of house tabs)*

I REMEMBER,
 YES I REMEMBER LAUGHTER,
 I REMEMBER HAPPY, HAPPY DAYS GONE BY.
 I REMEMBER SUCH HOURS OF HAPPINESS
 WHEN I WAS A CHILD.

HE REMEMBERS,
 HE REMEMBERS LAUGHTER,
 HE REMEMBERS HAPPY, HAPPY DAYS GONE BY.
 HE REMEMBERS SUCH HOURS OF HAPPINESS
 WHEN HE WAS A CHILD.

WILDE

MY MEMORIES THEY'RE WITH ME, FOR EVER
 THEY'VE HELPED ME SHAPE THE PERSON I'VE BECOME.
 MY MEMORIES ARE WITH ME FOR EVER 'TILL MY TIME, MY TIME IS COME.

WILDE

I remember singing with the birds, and buzzing with the bees.
 Those brightly coloured butterflies. The grazing of my knees.
 I remember being very brave and holding back the tears.
 Of being taught what's right, from wrong. Of never having fears.
 I remember make-believing, acting out such strange delights,
 Losing many days in other space and other times.

ALL

MY MEMORIES THEY'RE WITH ME, FOREVER.
 THEY'LL HELP ME SHAPE THE PERSON I'LL BECOME.
 MY MEMORIES ARE WITH ME, FOR EVER, 'TILL MY TIME, MY TIME IS COME.
 'TILL MY TIME IS COME! 'TILL MY TIME IS COME. 'TILL MY TIME IS COME!

(Children 'freeze')

WILDE

I remember my junior classroom ... *(Sniffs)* A bit whiffy! But a great place for learning!

TEACHER

(Enters with school bell. CHILDREN come to life as exuberant noisy youngsters and wheel in 'moveable' desks. TEACHER places school bell on OSCAR's empty desk).

Desks neatly in rows, please. I do like things arranged neatly. Everything in its rightful place.

(CHILDREN straighten up the desks, and quieten as TEACHER moves between the desks, smiling, nodding, checking cleanliness of their fingernails etc)

In your very neatest handwriting ... copy me. The letter 'S'! Start at the top, swoop left through the curve, slide to the right, swoop under and stop! The letter 'Q'! Middle at the top, draw a big, left, round squirkle. Take off the pen, draw a little piggy tail. Ha!

(CHILDREN mimic and laugh at TEACHER'S actions)

Time for four times tables. No cheating, no mouthing, no miming, please! One four is four, two fours are eight, three ... *(CHILDREN chanting then fade away into classroom business)*

WILDE

(To the AUDIENCE)

Sssh! I don't want to disturb the lesson. You won't have seen me as a tiddler just yet, but don't worry, my big entrance is coming soon! Our wonderful teacher, very firm, but always fair. *(Whispering)* I might have been secretly in love with him/her. Huh. Smiling and wanting the best from us. Looking out for nonsense, for whispers out of turn, for the tiniest glimpse of copying ...

(WILDE exits [to become OSCAR]. JO looks across to copy from a friend)

TEACHER

Jo! Enough of that. You must work it out for yourself. By copying from someone else, all you're showing me is how good you are copying. Where's the learning, Jo, where's the learning inside your head?

JO

Umm .. It's too hard for me.

TEACHER

(To HARRI) Harri, can you give Jo a bit of a hand with ...?

HARRI

Oh, why me again! I want to finish my sums, and Jo is not ...

TEACHER

Oh, dear! Harri? That's not very nice is it? Some day you might need help. How would you feel if no-one helped you when you needed it?

JO

Umm .. I don't wanna be no trouble, Harri.

TEACHER

You're not in trouble, Jo!

HARRI

But I think I might be. Please don't tell my Ma, or she'll give me a right telling off.

TEACHER

I won't tell. Now Harri, show me how well you can help Jo ...

(HARRI moves towards JO to help. OSCAR, dishevelled, enters in a rush)

Oscar Wilde, why the rush? Blown in on a gale?

(Straightens him up, dusts him down)

Where've you been, Oscar? Such a small errand I sent you on. Distracted again?

OSCAR

(Very theatrical, breathless, in a rush)

There was this ti-i-i-iny butterfly on the hot playground

TEACHER

... and you were the one who just had to rescue it?

OSCAR

Then, there was this ba-a-a-aby blackbird just fallen out of the nest

TEACHER

... and it took you all this time to put it back?

OSCAR

It was deep in the scraaaaatchy hedge, and I had to ...

TEACHER

Yes, yes, Oscar. Of course you 'had' to. Now settle down and stop disturbing the others and ...

OSCAR

Look at the clock. It's nearly hooome time! *(Picks up the school bell to as if to ring it)* Can I?

TEACHER

Oh, Oscar! You wild-child! It is your turn, I suppose. And you did save that butterfly. And the blackbird. *(Pause. In a rush.)* Yes! Go on! Go ring it! Pack your things away neatly!

(OSCAR rings the bell enthusiastically and CHILDREN make excited noises and chatter.)

CHILDREN

(Ad lib.) Hooray! Great! Wow! Brill! No more school!

(Cheers from CHILDREN who tidy and remove 'moveable' desks. House tabs open to reveal the Giant's garden in Spring. CHILDREN have comic chase into the garden.)

JO

Oh, you're all so noisy, noisy.

HARRI

Where shall we play, now we're free?

JO

Umm .. we could go home ...

HARRI

Come on, Jo, time for fun!

OSCAR

(Very theatrical, a-la Isadora Duncan)

Come on everyone! Into the gaaaarden. You don't wanna miss aaaaall the fun!

Scene 3 The Giant's Garden in Spring - #04 So Happy Are We Here; #05 I'm A Selfish Giant;