

Your Family Arts Center

DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

SYNOPSIS

Two Acts (about 90 minutes)

Join Wilbur, Charlotte, and all their barnyard neighbors as they learn about the meaning of true friendship!

Act 1

Day is breaking on the Arable farm. Wilbur, the runt of a litter of pigs just born, is saved from an early death by the farmer's daughter, Fern. Fern lovingly cares for and bottle-feeds the little pig until he's no longer so little. But, now that Wilbur's big and eating so much food, Mr. Arable thinks it's time for him to be sold (just like his brothers and sisters). Knowing that Fern will miss Wilbur, Mrs. Arable convinces her husband to sell him to Homer Zuckerman who happens to live right down the road.

Fern comes to visit Wilbur at his new home, reassuring him all will be well. After she leaves, Wilbur meets his new barnyard neighbors. He is quickly informed that the Zuckermans plan to fatten him up, although no one will tell him why. Wilbur falls asleep, not worrying too much about the news. Little does he know he shares his barn home with someone else.

The next day, Wilbur is sad and misses Fern. Lurvy, who works on the farm, discovers the melancholy pig and thinks he's sick. As he and Homer try to force medicine down the pig, Wilbur's barn-mate reveals herself; it's Charlotte, the spider. Even though Wilbur can't believe Charlotte eats bugs (well, actually, drinks their blood), they slowly become good friends. Life goes on at the farm. The goose and gander welcome baby goslings (although Templeton, the rat, is delighted when one of the eggs is a dud and rolls it off to hide among his things). As the animals and Fern chat, the old sheep reveals to Wilbur that the reason the Zuckermans have been fattening him up is to butcher him. Charlotte tries to calm a distraught Wilbur. Fern's brother comes to fetch Fern, but sees Charlotte and tries to capture her. Thanks to Wilbur and Fern, he's unsuccessful (although he does manage to crack the egg Templeton hid, which releases a very foul smell).

Charlotte makes a promise to Wilbur that she will save him, and, while he sleeps, she works on that promise. When Lurvy comes to deliver Wilbur's food in the morning, he sees something amazing and runs off to find Homer. Wilbur, worried that Lurvy thinks he's ready to be butchered, notices a hole in the fence and runs right through it. When Lurvy and Homer return, they chase after Wilbur (which creates quite a stir on the farm). They finally get Wilbur back in the barn, and Lurvy shows Homer what he saw: "some pig" is written in a spider web above Wilbur! Although Wilbur seems to be safe for now,

Charlotte knows she needs to keep thinking of new words to write in her web (and the other animals agree to help figure out what else she can spell).

Word of “some pig” spreads, and people come to see Wilbur. The next night Charlotte writes “terrific” in the web. The Zuckermans call it a miracle, and, when Fern asks if Wilbur will be killed, she’s reassured that he’s safe (for now). In fact, he’s going to go to the county fair and compete for the blue ribbon. A reporter even comes to see Wilbur. But Fern’s brother reminds everyone at the barn that he would make good bacon, and Wilbur faints from the thought! Then, the reporter notices another word is in the web: “radiant.” Homer declares that if Wilbur wins the blue ribbon, he won’t ever have to worry about being turned into bacon. Charlotte is starting to tire, knowing she needs to lay eggs soon, but decides she needs to go to the fair with Wilbur.

Intermission (15 minutes)

Act 2

It’s time for the county fair. After making Wilbur comfortable, Fern and her brother, the Arables, Zuckermans, and Lurvy go off to enjoy themselves. Finally alone, Charlotte asks Templeton to go find a word for her to write in her web. Then, she checks out the competition, a pig next door called Uncle. Templeton is back with a new word for Charlotte. It’s “humble”, which Charlotte thinks is just perfect for Wilbur. And, she mentions, it will be the last word she writes in her web for him.

The county fair shuts down for the evening, but Charlotte is just getting started on her new web. Wilbur asks her why it will be the last word she writes, and she answers that she has another job to do that she’ll show him later. Wilbur falls asleep. Charlotte works throughout the night.

In the morning, “humble” is written in the web. Wilbur also notices the egg sac Charlotte made during the night. To Wilbur’s sadness, Charlotte mentions she won’t live to see her eggs hatch. Templeton is back, and he’s brought some bad news: the pig next door, Uncle, has won the blue ribbon. Something in Wilbur changes; instead of focusing on the bad thing going on with himself, he decides to focus attention on Charlotte’s eggs.

The Zuckermans and Arables are disappointed that Wilbur lost the big blue ribbon. But, an announcement comes over the loudspeaker: there is going to be a special award presented. The special award is for Wilbur, and it’s a bronze medal! Excited, everyone runs off to enjoy the fair one last time (although Fern remembers to run back and hug Wilbur). Alone once again, Wilbur realizes that Charlotte is dying. He commands Templeton to fetch her egg sac so they can take it back to the farm. It’s time to go, and Wilbur and Charlotte say their good-byes. After Wilbur leaves, Charlotte dies.

Back at the farm, Wilbur cares for the egg sac. Time passes, and the eggs hatch. But, Wilbur and the rest of the barnyard animals watch as Charlotte’s children float away on clouds of silk. Wilbur wishes some would stay, and three do. Wilbur begins to tell them about their mother, as his bronze medal hangs in the place where her web used to be.

Notes:

- This play deals with emotionally-intense issues, including the death of a main character (Charlotte) and the threat of death for another (Wilbur).
- There will be an intermission during the show.
- During various points throughout the play, actors will enter the house. For a less-interactive experience, please sit towards the back of section B.