

Oscar Wilde's
THE HAPPY PRINCE
A Musical Setting: Paula Watkins

Children's Choir
Tableau participants
Narrator
Dancer(s)
Orchestration for harp, flute, violin, viola, cello, bells, percussion

Narrative and Suggested Performance Guidelines Using "Tableaux"

*Spot on Narrator brightens and dims with each narrative unless directed otherwise
Choir stands on risers (center or side staging)*

Tableaux and dance episodes arranged on multi-levels

Level 1 - Stage level

Level 2 - Rise 1

Level 3 - Rise 2

Level 4 - Pedestal, with exit behind

Tableaux 1-3: Happy Prince and Little Swallow, Level 4

Tableau 4: Mother and Sick Child, Level 3

Tableau 5: Cold Student, Level 2

Tableau 6: Little Match Girl and Hungry Children, Level 1

Tableau 7: Hungry Children Levels 1 & 2; Happy Prince and Little Swallow Levels 3 & 4

Tableau 8: Tableaux Casts 4, 5, 6; Happy Prince and Little Swallow All Levels

Tableau 9: Happy Prince

Tableau 10: Happy Prince, Mayor and three Town Councilors, Levels 1 & 4

Tableau 11: All

Narrator, stage level near choir

Instrumentalist(s), on stage

Backdrop depicting sky and 1800s European cityscape

(Lights up on Tableau 1: The Happy Prince on a pedestal. Right hand rests easily on sword hilt, left hand raised above head, comfortably triumphant, rather like a dandy. He looks out over the city into the audience.)

Song One - High Above the City Choir

1. HIGH ABOVE THE CITY

High above the city
on a column tall and strong
Stood a statue all of gold,
shining midst the throng.
His eyes were sapphire blue;
the richest ever seen;
A ruby topped his sword-hilt;
pure gold all in between.

This Happy Prince once laughed and ran
in gardens filled with flowers.
He knew no unkind word or deed;
pleasure filled his hours.
So he lived and so he died
and after he was gone
His people made a statue
for all to look upon.

Now in looking out
from eyes of deeper hue
The Happy Prince has learned that life
has quite another view.
He once saw only loveliness
and laughed and ate his bread,
But now the misery all around
has turned his heart to lead.

Lights down on Tableau 1 as song ends
Light Narrator

Narrator:

The happy, handsome prince, admired by all in the city!

One evening, a little swallow flew over the Prince's city. He was alone, hastening to join his friends who had already flown to a warmer

land. You see, he had fallen in love with a graceful river reed and could not bear to part with her!

Lights up on Tableau 2: The Happy Prince as in Tableau 1 with the Little Swallow just landed, wings spread, happy.

Song Two - I'm Going to Egypt Choir and Solo

2. I'M GOING TO EGYPT

*I'm going to Egypt!
But no one paid him heed
My lady love won't come though
She's just a slender reed.
I love to follow the sunbeam's glimmer
Now watch the swallow dart and shimmer
Oh see the splendid city!
I think I'll stay the night beneath the statue bright
A good place to sleep tight. Good night.*

Tableau lighting down, spot on Narrator

Narrator:

The little swallow was just putting his head under his wing, there in his golden bedroom, when—plop! And again, plop!

“What! Two drops of water have fallen upon me from a clear, starlit sky!” he said, looking up. But as he looked up, he saw—ah! What did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were running over with tears.

“Why are you weeping?” he said, full of pity for the beautiful, sad face.

Lights up on Tableau 3: The Happy Prince as in Tableau 1, but with head turned downward with downcast eyes. The Little Swallow stands and looks up in wonder.

Song Three - For People Choir

3. FOR PEOPLE

I weep for people young and old
Who bear sorrows never told.
I weep for others' misery
For all who are not blessed like me.

I weep for people young and old
I weep.
Who bear sorrows never told.
I weep.
I weep for others' misery
I weep.
For all who are not blessed like me.

Tableau lighting down

Spot on Narrator

Tableau 3 exit; Tableau 4 take position

Narrator:

“Far away,” said the statue in a low musical voice, “far away through an open poorhouse window I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all prickled by the needle. She is embroidering on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen’s maids. In the corner bed, her little boy is tossing with a fever. He is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying.

Swallow, swallow, Little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move.”

Stage Right: Lights up on Tableau 4: Mother embroidering a golden satin gown, fabric draped over a small table. Mother is turned away from the fabric and desk. She is reaching for her sick little boy, who is uncomfortably lying on a floor pad.

Song 4 - But It is Winter Choir

4. BUT IT IS WINTER

I. *My Prince, but it is winter
The cold will soon be here.
Friends are calling me
To where it's warm and skies are clear.*

II. Swallow, little swallow
Please stay and bear my gift.

I. *It's cold here I must leave soon
But I'll stay one night, I'll stay.*

II. Oh Swallow, Little Swallow
You must stay one night, oh stay.
Ah!

(When the words of the song end and the humming of the "Give Theme" (m23) begins, continue narration.)

Narrator:

So the swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince's sword and flew away with it over the roofs of the town.

At last he came to the poor house and flew in. He laid the great ruby on the table where the tired mother had fallen asleep.

A red glow appears on the fabric. (A battery-operated light within a prismatic holder simulates a ruby.)

Then he flew gently 'round the bed, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings, and the boy, feeling cooler, sank into a delicious slumber.

Lights out on Tableau 4 and choir. Tableau 4 stay in freeze position.

Tableau 5 take position

The swallow flew back to the Happy Prince.

"It is curious," said the little bird, "but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold." This made him begin to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.

End "Give Theme"

Pause

The next day after bathing in the river and seeing the city, the Little Swallow flew back to his new friend. “Good-bye, Happy Prince!” cried the swallow. “I’m off to Egypt now!”

“Swallow, Swallow, Little Swallow,” said the Prince, “far away across the city I see a young man leaning over a desk covered with papers. In a tumbler by his side is a bunch of withered violets. He is trying to finish a play for the director of the theater, but he is too cold to write any more. Please take to him one of my eyes: this rare and costly sapphire. He will sell it to the jeweler and buy food and firewood and finish his play.”

Lights up on Tableau 5: Cold Student. A young man sits at a desk, cold and discouraged. He rests his forehead on his hands, elbows on desk. On the desk is a tumbler of withered violets.

Song Five - Stay One Night Choir

5. NOW I AM WEEPING

II. *My Prince, now I am weeping.
I cannot pluck out your eye.
Wintertime is not for swallows!
I must say good-bye.*

I. Swallow, Little Swallow,
Stay one night and bear my gift!
Swallow little Swallow
Stay one night to carry my gift.
Stay one night.

II. *I must leave soon
But I'll stay one night to carry your gift.
Stay one night.*

Ah!

Narrator begins at m. 20 (“Give Theme”)

So the Little Swallow darted into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird’s wings.

A blue glow appears on the withered violets.

When he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets. “I am beginning to be appreciated!” he exclaimed.

Narrator pauses until the end of “Give Theme”

Lights slowly down on Tableau 5. Tableau 5 stay in freeze position.

Spot on narrator:

The next afternoon after visiting the great ships in the harbor and keeping company with the sparrows, the swallow came to bid a final good-bye.

“Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away.”

Lights up on Tableau 6: Hungry Children huddle together, pale and cold. Little Match Girl enters (with bare legs, wears thin rags, a carry box with neck-strap) trips and falls to the ground; pantomimes spilling of matches. She freezes, looking down at the matches, palm of hand outward at her mouth, opened in dismay.

“In the square below,” said the Happy Prince, “there stands a little match girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her.”

“I will stay with you one night longer,” said the swallow, “but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then.”

“Swallow, Swallow, Little Swallow,” said the Prince. “Do as I command you.”

Song Six - Do As I Command Duet

<p>6. I'LL STAY (Duet) Swallow, Little Swallow <i>I can't pluck out your eye.</i> Do as I command you <i>This I cannot, this I cannot do</i> Do as I command you <i>Oh, Happy Prince ... I'll stay.</i></p>

Narrator:

So he plucked out the Prince's other eye. Swooping past the match girl, he slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand.

A blue glow appears in her hand.

"What a lovely bit of glass!" cried the little girl, and she ran home laughing.

Lights out on Tableau 6 and choir. Little Match Girl exits; Hungry Children stay in place. Darkness, no spot on narrator

Pause... "Now, Little Friend, you may go."

"You are blind now," said the swallow. "I will stay with you always."

Tableau 7: Lights up slowly on the prince and the swallow, wings outspread looking up at the prince. Hungry Children hold pose in dim periphery. Prince's eyes are closed and face lifted to the light. His stage-back hand palm outward is by eye, other hand is chest high, extended outward, palm-down, with fingers relaxed, index finger leading.

So he slept at the Prince's feet. He told him of marvelous things, seen 'round the world.

"But," said the Prince, "more marvelous than anything is the suffering of men and women. I am covered with fine gold. You must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor."

Song 7 - Bits of Gold Choir, Dance Interlude

7. BITS OF GOLD

Bits of gold to ward off cold;
Leaf after leaf to lessen grief;
Share the glitter, share the shine
And the riches that are mine.

That the children may have bread;
That the sick may leave their bed;
That the cold may have a fire
And their secret heart's desire.

(Dance Interlude)

Oh Swallow, Little Swallow:

Please stay one night with me.

It's cold here but I'll stay one night

That the children may have bread

That the sick may leave their bed

That the cold may have a fire

And their secret heart's desire.

Bits of gold to ward off cold

Leaf after leaf to lessen grief

Share the glitter, share the shine

And the riches that are mine.

(Dance Interlude)

Ah!

After verses 1 and 2, lights up on Tableaux & Dance 8: Little Swallow, Mother and sick boy (4); Cold Student (5); Hungry Children (6)

Swallow dances. As she goes to each scene she brings the poses to life with pantomimed gold offerings. Each scene briefly moves to show healing, joy, surprise and then scene members exit in choreographed movement.

During Little Swallow's dance interludes, the Happy Prince stays on the pedestal, but he follows the Little Swallow with his head; using arms to express or reflect the Swallow's dance communications: loyalty, joy, pity, sacrifice, resignation.

Ends with light focused on Little Swallow on Level 3 with the Happy Prince, near his shoulder. Little Swallow freezes in position showing coldness and fatigue.

Narrator:

The poor little swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince; he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs from the snow outside the baker's door and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings. But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up the Prince's shoulder once more.

“Good-bye dear Prince,” he murmured. He kissed the Happy Prince and fell down dead at his feet.

Lights down, darkness

Preparation for Tableau 9: Swallow exits; Happy Prince's arms go limp, head droops, and shoulders slump.

Light dims on Narrator

Narrator, in darkness:

At that moment, a curious crack sounded inside the statue. The leaden heart had snapped right in two.

Lights slowly up (very dim) on choir

Tableau 9: Lights (somewhat brighter than choir lighting) up on Happy Prince

Song Eight - For People (reprise) Choir and Solo

8. (Reprise) FOR PEOPLE

I weep for people young and old
Who bear sorrows never told.
I weep for others' misery
For all who are not blessed like me.

I weep for people young and old
I can't pluck out your eye
Who bear sorrow never told
This I cannot do for you; I weep
I weep for others' misery
This I cannot, this I cannot; This I can—
For you

Narrator:

Unasked, and unheralded, the Happy Prince had given all he possessed.

Pause

Tableau & Pantomime 10

Enter: Three town councilors and the mayor. They gather around the prince, pantomiming characteristics as spoken by Narrator. Each assumes a self important posture.

Early the next morning, the most important men in the city were walking in the square below. The mayor, in company with the town councilors, was taking inspection.

Position #1 “Our people are much better off since we became important,” said the mayor.

Positions #2 & #3 “Ah, yes!” nodded the councilmen.

Position #4 “Have you noticed how much brisker business has become?” eagerly asked the clerk.

Reposition #1 “Ah, yes!” approved the mayor.

But then they stopped short. (*Snap to in unison*) Standing there by the column, they looked up at the statue. (*Look up in unison, each with a unique pose*)

Song Nine - Dear Me! Choir

9. DEAR ME!

Dear me! How shabbily the Happy Prince stands there,
Dear me! How shabby indeed.

His ruby has fallen, his eyes are gone, he's grey now.

Dear me! A beggar in need

A little dead bird here at his feet

A law should prohibit a bird from dying on the street.

Tear down the statue! Throw it in the dump!

Melt all the metal down to a lump!

Then make another better statue by far

With no imperfections its beauty to mar.

Make it of me!

Why no, of me!

No! Me, me, me!

I'm the best it's plain to see!

I'm the best it's plain to see, see, see, see

No me, me, me, me, me, me, me!

Narrator:

When I last heard of them, they were quarreling still.

Lights blackout

Happy Prince and town councilors exit

Lights up on narrator:

.....
“What a strange thing!” said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. “This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away.”

So they threw it on a dust heap where the dead swallow was also lying.

Lights up on choir

Song Ten - The Most Precious Things Choir and Solo Recitative

10. THE MOST PRECIOUS THINGS

God said to his angels,
Bring me the two most precious things in the city.

“See!” the foremost angel said,
“Here is the heart once made of lead.
Though cracked from princely grief and woe,
It shines now more than all the gold below.

“He gave in love with all his might
He even gave away his sight.
By helping those in misery,
He made the world a better place to be.”

He has chosen rightfully
From all things, for he shall see
With heart and soul beyond the skies;
Far more than sapphires shall adorn his eyes.”

Then another angel brought
The lifeless feathers scorned as naught.
“Ah,” said he, “this little friend
Stayed ever true and ever faithful to the end.

“Serving one who needed him,
Who could not walk, whose eyes were dim

Undaunted, through the cold he flew
Until his soul, his precious soul, returned to you.”

Swallow, Little Swallow
Stay no more in winter’s night.
Fly home to rest, be warmed and blest
And dwell in joy forever in my light.

“And the voice of weeping
Shall be heard no more!
Be ye glad and rejoice, rejoice.”

Now in looking out from eyes of deeper hue
The Happy Prince has learned that life
Has quite another view.

Amen!

Tableau 11

Lighting up on tableaux (light more gold)

Little Swallow enters at m.55 / Dance recaps Little Swallow’s service. Prince enters at m.70/ dances with Little Swallow / At m. 78 Prince and Swallow dance with lifts, exultant

At m. 88, townspeople enter, humming the hymn, choir sings descant

At m 97, the Sick Boy, now well, excitedly pulls the Happy Prince up to Level 3. The Happy Prince continues, ascending to Level 4, with attention to Sick Boy and the people below, and assumes original pose

The Sick Boy stays on Level 3, releases The Happy Prince’s hand, reaching out to him and then to his mother who has followed them up the platforms. She gathers her son into her arms. Discouraged Student and Little Match Girl assume pose on Level 2. On Level 1, Town Councilors, Mayor, Hungry Children part to pay homage to Little Swallow. Townspeople sing with choir, m 101 to end.

At “Ah” All turn toward Little Swallow, who is at the Prince’s feet on Level 1, & assume poses of gentle acknowledgement.

Little Swallow moves into finale “Amen dance,” Townspeople lift him to platform at Happy Prince’s side. Level 1 people gather around the Happy Prince and the Little Swallow, looking upward. Light floods the Little Swallow and the Happy Prince, radiant, glorious and triumphant. Lights up on all Tableaux. All assume finale poses.