



The Guide to Musical Theatre

CHARLOTTE SWEET

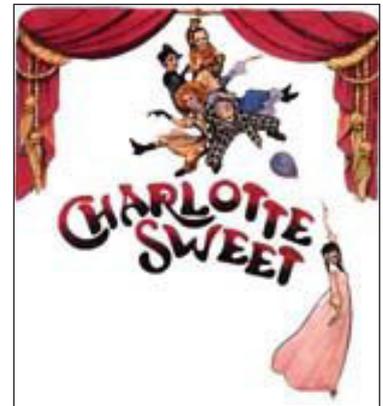
Music by Gerald Jay Markoe, Book & Lyrics by Michael Colby

Westside Arts / Cheryl Crawford Theatre - Off-Broadway 22 August, 1982
(102 perfs)

An ensemble of music-hall performers gather to enact The Story of Charlotte Sweet.

STORY

ACT I



In the turn-of-the-century England we meet Charlotte Sweet, the darling of Liverpool. Charlotte attributes her sweetness to the fact that she was born of Valentine's Day.

Charlotte's beau is the equally cute Ludlow Ladd Grimble who was born on Christmas day. Exchanging keepsakes, Charlotte gives her sweetheart a heart-shaped locket, while Ludlow gives Charlotte a Christmas log cake from the bakery where he works. They pledge their love to each other forever. Afterwards they join their neighbours to admire the sunset over Liverpool.

Meanwhile, at home, Charlotte's mother, a chronic shiverer, has suffocated under the layers of underwear it took to keep her warm. Her sad end is told by Charlotte's father, Bob Sweet and visitors Barnaby and Katinka Bugaboo. Barnaby is the impresario of a music-hall troupe featuring Katinka, his buxom wife. The couple arrived to collect on Bob's debt, incurred from the tremendous cost of his wife's underwear. Bob agrees to a proposal from Barnaby that all the debt will be liquidated if Charlotte agrees to join the music-hall troupe. Charlotte reluctantly agrees. Barnaby is particularly pleased as he has long had a secret lust for Charlotte, his little song-thrush.

We meet the members of Barnaby's freaky music-hall troupe which is, in effect, a circus of voices. In addition to the high-voiced Charlotte and the low-voiced Katinka, the circus features Cecily Macintosh, a rippling, bubbly voice who is also wardrobe mistress, Skitzzy Schofield, a schizophrenic double-voice, half high-born gentlewoman and half Cockney rogue, Harry Host - a "fast-voice" who serves as MC of festivities. As this third-class troupe tours the lonely circuit of Britain, Charlotte steals the show with her coloratura performances.

During one performance, Ludlow waits backstage only to be evicted from the theatre by Barnaby. When the troupe takes a break, Barnaby praises Charlotte provoking Katinka to make jealous remarks. Cecily defends the girl and Skitzzy's two voices argue over her merits.

However, Charlotte rises to fame achieving considerable success for the Circus of Voices. But, doing six shows a night takes its toll. Charlotte has a vocal breakdown and loses her op register. The Bugaboos hatch a cunning plan to restore her high notes - they addict her to helium balloons. Barnaby is ecstatic for nothing can now hinder his own rise from shabby origins to shimmering, evil heights.

ACT II

It is December 31 and the Bugaboos has enlisted the guard duties of a whistling, Scotland Yard policeman,

Patrick O'Toole. To ensure he doesn't notice Charlotte's addiction to helium, the Bugaboos invite Patrick to perform with the troupe.

Cecily, Harry and Skitzzy share Charlotte's delight as she opens a gift from Ludlow. The message inside describes how Ludlow has been prevented by the Bugaboos from seeing her. Charlotte vows to escape the circus when Ludlow shows up and invites her friends to flee with her. They refuse. Skitzzy reveals that the trio had been found in a Dover lunatic asylum where they will be returned by the Bugaboos if they should misbehave.

The New Year's Eve performance is about to take place and any thought that Charlotte had of escaping is quickly dashed when the Bugaboos give her a mighty whiff of helium. Charlotte is a triumph that night and then arrives the ultimate honour - a visit from the Queen. Charlotte is showered with praise by the Queen who then takes off her outer garments to reveal Ludlow in disguise. Patrick O'Toole, it turns out, is Bob Sweet in disguise also. They have come to rescue Charlotte. Their plan is nearly foiled by the Bugaboos who threaten to kill Charlotte. After a m el e in which shots are fired and deflected, Barnaby meets his end when a balloon with a lethal dose of helium detonates and kills him. Katinka vows to reform and then the New Year bells ring out. Charlotte and Ludlow are reunited with a kiss.

MUSICAL NUMBERS:

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| 1. A-Weaving | 15. Keep It Low |
| 2. At the Music Hall | 16. Layers Of Underwear |
| 3. Bubbles In Me Bonnet | 17. The Letter (Me Charlotte Dear) |
| 4. Charlotte Sweet | 18. Liverpool Sunset |
| 5. A Christmas Buche | 19. Lonely Canary |
| 6. The Circus Of Voices | 20. My Baby and Me |
| 7. Darkness | 21. On It Goes |
| 8. A Daughter of Valentine's Day | 22. Quartet Agonistes |
| 9. Dover | 23. Queenly Comments |
| 10. Farewell To Auld Lang Syne | 24. The Reckoning |
| 11. Forever | 25. Surprise! Surprise! |
| 12. Good Things Come | 26. Vegetable Reggie |
| 13. It Could Only Happen In the Theatre | 27. You See In Me Bobby |
| 14. Katinka | 28. Your High Note! |

CAST

- Harry Host
- Charlotte Sweet
- Ludlow Land Grimble
- Bob Sweet
- Barnaby Bugaboo
- Katinka Bugaboo
- Cecily Mackintosh
- Skitzzy Scofield

DISCOGRAPHY:

Cast Recording - DRG 6300