

CHARLES DARWIN: TO LOVE THE EARTH

CONCERT VERSION

CHARLES DARWIN - SINGING (TENOR)
WILLIAM DARWIN - FATHER - SINGING (BARITONE)
JOS. WEDGWOOD - UNCLE - SPEAKING
JOHN HENSLOW - CAMBRIDGE PROFESSOR - SINGING (TENOR)
JOSEPH HOOKER - SPEAKING
ROBERT FITZROY - BEAGLE CAPTAIN - SPEAKING
CAROLINE DARWIN - CHARLES' OLDER SISTER - SINGING (CONTRALTO)
EMMA WEDGWOOD - SINGING (SOPRANO)
FANNY WEDGWOOD - SPEAKING
ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE - SPEAKING
OFFSTAGE VOICES - HENSLOW'S WIFE, SAILOR, LETTER-WRITERS
CHORUS - SINGING (THE OFFSTAGE VOICES CAN COME FROM THE CHORUS)

There should be two separate stage areas which can be used for scenes. Scenes can alternate between the two areas so that scene changes are minimal. Interludes between scenes are very brief, (20-40 seconds) and do not provide for extensive scene changes.

There are many options for the performance. Minimal staging would just involve two areas where the main singers perform. Backgrounds can be minimal and suggestive of locations. Projections of scenes behind the actors are an option.

The chorus should be small – 8 -16 persons, and they can be seen, but are not directly on stage. The chorus can sing from scores. Offstage spoken lines can all come from members of the chorus. It is also possible that those who are singing the parts of Father, Caroline, and Henslow could also be in the chorus.

Darwin's image with a long white beard is well known. He only had this beard from the middle of his life. So there should be an opportunity to apply a beard during scene 10.

In this script sung lines are indicated in arial font, and spoken lines by courier .

NOTE: Songs that are based on words by Darwin himself and identified by #.

[1 - 1. Opening Music](#)

SCENE 4

(Captain Robert FitzRoy should be in a naval uniform. The scene can be represented with a ship in the background, or on board a sailing vessel.)

FITZROY

I am Captain Robert FitzRoy of the Royal Navy. I have been commissioned to be Captain of the Beagle on a voyage to chart in increased detail the coasts of Tierra del Fuego, the Falkland islands, the location of numerous Pacific islands and other areas of military and commercial significance.

And finally, to circumnavigate the globe using a system of specially designed chronometers - a first for Britain. This will take us two years.

Our crew are all experienced sailors, fine and honorable men. But they are all uneducated and not the type for an interesting conversation. There are many long hours on a voyage like this, and that is why I requested a gentleman who is knowledgeable about nature, and who also would be a good conversationalist. Professor Henslow of Cambridge University recommended a student, Charles Darwin.

Darwin was actually pursuing a degree in Theology, but Henslow said that he had distinguished himself in all the courses in natural history. But more than that, he had great enthusiasm for observation and field trips.

Although I had my doubts about Mr. Darwin, I found that he is a most pleasant person, and also fairly easy going. And he was very enthused about the chance to be part of the voyage.

4-2 - The Beagle Interlude

(The deck of the Beagle)

FITZROY

Twice the Beagle attempted to sail, and each time we were driven back by heavy southwestern gales. Finally, on December 27th, 1831, Her Majesty's ship, the Beagle, a ten-gun brig, sailed from Devonport.

DARWIN

Ohh. Ahh.

(In pain – holding stomach)

I was sea sick as soon as we got underway. Oh, and I thought this was going to be fun. Ohh, and no relief. I threw up over the side, again and again. Ohh. The pain and horrible feeling. The crew were amused, although kind to me. I don't know how they could stand it. Ohh. Ahh.

FITZROY

I feel sorry for the poor fellow – but there is nothing you can do. His sickness is constant. We made him a hammock, to cut down the movement a bit. I am not one for sea sickness, but the stench of vomit in the cabin is hard to endure without getting sick yourself.

SAILOR

Land Ho! **(offstage)**

DARWIN

(sees the peak in the distance)

Oh I have hope. We were nearing the Grand Canary Island and I could get on solid land again! Just then, the sun shown on the peak of Teneriffe...

4-3 We Saw the Sun Rise #

(The background can represent the scene described during the following piece.)

CHORUS

We saw the sun rise behind the rugged outline
of the Grand Canary island,
and suddenly illuminate
the Peak of Teneriffe,
while the lower parts
were veiled in fleecy clouds.
This was the first of many delightful days
never to be forgotten.

FITZROY

We were not allowed to go on to the island of Teneriffe because of a cholera quarantine. So we continued on to the Cape Verde islands, and Darwin went on shore while we completed measurements around the islands. He returned with birds that he had shot, a few mammals, and numerous plants. I saw with what vigor he collected specimens of all kinds. I was very impressed.

We then continued across the Atlantic toward South America, where we would be taking detailed measurements. This allowed Darwin to go on shore to explore the continent at length.

DARWIN

I was so looking forward to getting on land again!

SCENE 5

(Tropical Forest)

DARWIN

On February 29th, I set out on my first venture into a Brazilian forest. It was a rapturous experience.

5-1 The Elegance of the grasses #

The elegance of the grasses,
the novelty of the plants,
the beauty of the flowers,
the glossy green of the foliage,

but above all, the general luxuriance of the vegetation,
filled me with immense admiration.

The day was powerfully hot...

5-1a The day was powerfully hot #

CHORUS

The day was powerfully hot,
and as we passed through the woods,
everything was motionless,
excepting the large and brilliant butterflies,
which fluttered about.

The view was most beautiful;
the colors were intense,
and the prevailing tint a dark blue;
the sky and the calm waters of the bay
vied with each other in splendor.

FITZROY

(Beagle)

Darwin ventured inland in Brazil as we continued our measurements for several weeks around the eastern coast of South America. Again, he returned with boxes and boxes of specimens of the life as well as examples of the geology that he found. He had numerous drawings of the landscape farther inland.

DARWIN

I sent boxes of things to Professor Henslow to study and evaluate. He said that he will also forward some items to other qualified experts. I myself only feel slightly competent to evaluate the geology. And so he will forward these to Professor Lyell. I don't know what they will think about these things that I am sending them. Maybe they will think that this is just junk - having no scientific interest at all. Maybe they will think I am just wasting their time. I cannot wait to hear back from Henslow about what I am sending them.

I had heard about the practice of slavery in the Americas, and as long as I can remember, my family and I were vehemently opposed to treating another human being in such a way. Even then, I was not prepared for what I saw in Brazil:

5-2 I heard the most pitiable moans

I heard the most pitiable moans,
when some poor slave was being tortured.
Near Rio I lived opposite to an old lady, who kept screws to crush the fingers
of her female slaves.
I stayed in a house
where a young household mulatto,
daily and hourly,
was reviled, beaten, and persecuted enough
to break the spirit of the lowest animal.

I saw a little boy, six or seven years old, struck thrice with a horse-whip on his
naked head.

I saw his father tremble
at a mere glance from his master's eye.

I thank God I shall never again visit a slave country. I shall never again visit a
slave country.

FITZROY

As we continued on around the Tierra del Fuego and Cape Horn, the seas became even rougher, the winds are ferocious and everything is freezing.

DARWIN

(to FitzRoy)

Oh Captain, my seasickness is worse than ever. I feel so weak. Maybe I should go home. The idea of being a country parson in England is sounding very attractive to me right now!

FITZROY

Just get those ideas out of your head, Charles. It just makes the days more difficult to bear!

DARWIN

I realized that as soon as I got off the ship, I was filled with delight about all that I was seeing. I just had to endure the sea-going part of it. All at once I was conscious: naturalizing is doing my duty, and if I should neglect my duty I should at the same time neglect what has given me so much pleasure!

I still have not heard back from Henslow. I know the mail is very haphazard - catching a ship traveling across the Atlantic. But it has been nearly three months and still, I have not heard from him.

FITZROY

We were now aware that this mission to take measurements was going to take much longer than we expected. I was committed to accurate measurements, so we could not do this haphazardly. By now it is becoming clear that this will take more than two years!

5 -3 I Receive Packages

(Cambridge)

HENSLOW

Everyone is excited by the packages that we get from Darwin. There are plants and animals no one has ever seen before. I even presented a summary of some of his notes to the Linean Society, and also forwarded them to his father. And I responded to Darwin immediately telling him what a great success he is.

I receive packages from Darwin filled with fossils, carcasses of all kinds of birds and animals as well as pressed plants and flowers.

The wealth and variety of information that he gleans from everywhere he visits is astounding. He writes extensive notes about what he is seeing that do not lend themselves to shipping. I am now convinced more than ever that I selected exactly the right person to be the naturalist on this voyage of the Beagle.

DARWIN
(Reading a book)

This boggles my mind! This changes everything! Our most eminent geologist, Charles Lyell has proven that the earth is old beyond our imagining! Not just a few thousand years that the theologians had assumed. He says it is more like **many millions of years.**

This now makes sense of those ancient fossils of marine life in the middle of the continent! This has required an immeasurably long period of time. He says that change has occurred on earth gradually - through wind and rain, heat and cold, erosion from water and wind, the gradual movements of continents creating mountain ranges!

And these fossils of animals no longer existing are from an incredible amount of time in the past. What this means about continents, about all kinds of life is startling. I began to think how life must have started eons ago... My mind is reeling. I can hardly sleep at night.

I must write Lyell and tell him what I am seeing!

I still have not heard from Henslow. I may be a failure and I will be afraid to show my face back at home... I wish I knew what everyone thinks of what I am sending back.

*5 -4 What strange pleasure #
(Desolate landscape)*

what strange pleasure this excites in me
how many ages had these plains lasted?
how many more were they doomed to continue?

And the mountains of southern Chile, those solid masses of granite, destitute of vegetation, capped with mica-slate, eroded in sharp stone fingers
--how long had they lasted?

DARWIN

With the fossil bones I uncover
I see a South American continent
aswarm with monsters,
giant versions of the same species
that now inhabit these places.

From that moment I suspected
that the wondrous relation
between the dead and the living
would shed light on the
appearance of organic beings on earth.

And when I saw how every part of the world
is habitable-- even those regions deemed most
inhospitable and barren all support some kind of life,
whether lakes of brine, hot mineral springs, the wide
expanse and depths of the oceans, or even the surface of
perpetual snow--

5 – 5 I began to understand #

I began to understand
how all life is suited to its home.
And I saw too that the crust of the earth,
is constantly in motion and prone to change, not usually in a sudden awesome
fashion,
but in a slow gradual manner over
unimaginable years
have the mountains been uplifted,
the shorelines moved.

DARWIN

Finally, we received letters from months ago, which
included letters from Henslow and my sisters. I got much
praise from Henslow, and he said that he had received a
letter from my father who is so proud of me and what I am
accomplishing. My sisters said the same thing. I was so
overjoyed. My father - he admires what I am doing! I have
never been happier than I am right now!

SCENE 6

FITZROY

And then we continued North along the Western shore of
South America. The sun was just coming up...

(Black landscape of the Galapagos)

6 -1 It Was as if in the night #

CHORUS

It was as if in the night
our ship had confounded ocean and sky,
slipped from the surface of the earth,
sailed out of this world
and at dawn
had anchored on the shore of the moon
--the Galapagos.

DARWIN

Nothing could appear less inviting--
a broken field of black basaltic lava
thrown in rugged waves
like a dark frozen sea,
the parched ground cracked and fissured,
covered with sunburnt brushwood
like the skeletons of stunted trees.

Everywhere I looked
the land attested to the power of fire and heat,
since these islands boiled up
out of the sea.

The sand was burnt black.

There were thousands of craters,
some huge cooled cauldrons,
their sides littered with ash and cinders;
others were smaller
where hot mud had bubbled and popped,
and was now congealed.

6 – 2 And from the summit #

CHORUS

And from the summit of one large crater
we saw a small plume of smoke.
It spoke plainly in the language of fire:
the days of creation are not over,
the forces that raised this land
are working still.

DARWIN

What am I seeing?
The islands, close enough that you can see one from the
other - And the finches are different on each.

Some have large beaks for cracking seeds, and others, different distinct characteristics.

And the same goes for the tortoises - on each island they are unique. There are also plants that appear on just one of the islands.

What am I seeing? I will collect specimens and send them back to my friends in England... But what does this mean?

SCENE 7

(The Beagle)

FITZROY

We were at sea for what seemed unending weeks as we crossed the Pacific Ocean. As we approached the island of Tahiti we were greeted by boats full of natives who welcomed us to their island. These people seemed so happy and generous. This actually disturbed me. These people were not Christians - they had their own religion.

DARWIN

In the middle of the night I was startled awake! The continual rocking of the ship had stopped. I couldn't believe it. I knew we were still well into the Pacific, but did we run aground on some unknown atoll or island? I went on deck. The moon was shining brightly and no, we were not on ground; the sea was just perfectly calm. I had never seen anything like this before, it was so beautiful:

7 - 1 A Moonlit Night # (moonlit night at sea)

DARWIN AND CHORUS

A moonlit night,
with the clear heavens and the dark glittering sea,
and the white sails filled by the soft air
of a gently blowing trade-wind,
a dead calm,
with the heaving surface polished like a mirror,
and all still, except the occasional flapping of the canvass. A Moonlit night.

DARWIN

FitzRoy shared his cabin with me for all these weeks and months. And for the most part, we got along quite well. There was on time when we had a fierce battle - he spoke in praise of slavery and I told him that I believed it was an abomination. We argued for some time, and then he refused to speak to me for several weeks thereafter.

As we continued around the globe, FitzRoy got more and more depressed. The crew and I, homesick ourselves, were worried when FitzRoy started talking about quitting the ship. We had to talk him into completing the voyage. FitzRoy did finally come out of his dark mood, and we returned to England - after five long years away.

7 – 2 Interlude - End of the Voyage (Music continues briefly under the dialog)

SCENE 8

(Back Home – same as scene 1)

Father, Caroline, Wedgwood, and Emma have all gathered to welcome Darwin home.

FATHER, WEDGWOOD, EMMA, CAROLINE

not together, but overlapping:

Charles! Welcome home! Charley, you're looking good.

DARWIN

It is SO good to be home! I hate sailing, and I hope I never have to get on another ship again.

CAROLINE

Charley, it seems longer than 5 years!

DARWIN

It seems like a lifetime ago.

WEDGWOOD

Welcome home Charles. World traveler!

DARWIN

Thanks uncle Jos. It so is good to see you all.

WEDGWOOD

You remember my daughter, Emma?

DARWIN

Yes. Oh yes, I remember all the Wedgwoods. We always had so much fun together. Hello Emma.

EMMA
Welcome back, Charles.

FATHER
Come! This calls for a celebration.

(lifting a glass)
To Charles!

DARWIN
To home, to England, and to solid land!

ALL
Here! Here!

FATHER
You must tell us all about it...

(all exit excepting for Caroline)

(Caroline has a box of rocks and bones and takes a few out as she sings.)

CAROLINE
While he was away on the Beagle, Charley sent back boxes and boxes of who knows what. I thought that would be all, but now he arrived with a horse-drawn cart full of even more things.

8-2 There were fossils

There were fossils, rocks, and bones, bird specimens, and things I don't even know what they are. And now, he brought back trunks of things from around the world. So many trunks of things from all over the world. He is sorting and examining – sorting and examining all those things. I can't imagine how long it will take.

He said that his work is clearly cut out for him for the foreseeable future. He has been sending things to the geologist Lyell, and to the botanist, Hooker and Henslow – to see what they can make of them.

Father is still hopeful that Charley will now pursue being a clergyman, but Charley says that he is no longer interested in that, and that his future is pretty well laid out for him now. It is clear that he is feeling very good about himself because he has gotten praise from many of the most distinguished experts in the sciences.

He has already been asked to present a paper before the
Linean Society.

DARWIN

I marked everything I collected, but I have books and
books of notes about all these things. I now have to
organize them. It will actually be easier now that I am
not fighting sea-sickness all the time.

CAROLINE

The Darwins often got together with the Wedgwoods as we
were growing up. And lately, since Charley returned from
his voyage, when we are at the Wedgwoods, Emma and
Charley somehow get away by themselves.

EMMA

(at The Wedgwood home)

We have the most interesting talks. And Charley is so
open and unassuming, I feel I know him better than anyone
else in the world.

He is committed to his work and talks with great
enthusiasm about what he is doing.

DARWIN

I need a place of my own so that I can work without
distraction. Caroline and Father are very considerate,
but I have so many things to sort out, and I need to
organize them in boxes and on shelves. And I found a
place in London, which also has the advantage that it is
the location of most of the scientific meetings.

EMMA

After Charley moved to London, it seemed like he didn't
visit so much. But we still kept in touch by letters.

SCENE 10

(Kew Gardens)

HOOKER

I am Joseph Hooker, Botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens
at Kew, and I quickly became well acquainted with Charles
Darwin. While on his voyage, Darwin sent me all kinds of
plants. He wanted me to examine them since he was not
sure what they were by himself.

And what I received was a wealth of information. There
are plants similar to those we have in this part of the
world, and yet so very different. This is causing me to
reconsider the whole history of plant life on the earth.

10 -2 It is most curious

HENSLLOW

(Cambridge)

My training was in Theology. And there was no conflict in my mind between that and my studies in botany... Until now...

It is most curious.

There are fossils of plants and animals that no longer exist.

And yet there are living versions

that differ in size with slight difference in structure.

What does this mean?

Were these living versions not present in Genesis?

Was there a second Genesis? Have there been many?

Why? Why?

What happened to those that are now extinct?

It is most curious!

10 - 3 I knew how much I liked him

EMMA

(At her home)

I knew how much I liked him then--

but was not sure how he felt about me since he is fond of us all.

I wish I knew how he felt about me.

But now that he is in London,

He does not see that much of me anymore.

I worry that he has forgotten about me,

While I think about him all the time.

I dared hope if he saw more of me

he would really like me too,

but I was unprepared for that November day when next we met

and he asked me to marry him.

10- 4 Interlude

(Kew Gardens)

HOOKER

Darwin was starting to ask a question that baffled us all - Is it possible that a species could evolve into another? He would send me letters about things that he was investigating but not ready to publish them to the world yet. Many of us believed that this had occurred, but not everyone was convinced about evolution.

SCENE 11

(Darwin and Emma are together in London)

EMMA

I don't know why, but I went into his study and I spoke to him of God. Charles confessed his doubts to me: during his voyage, he said, less and less did he see the earth as product of God's great plan. More and more, he said, he sensed the force of the laws of nature. My religion is important to me, and I do not take it lightly. Our love for one another is very strong, but I am not sure how we can resolve this issue.

DARWIN

I am spending all my time writing up my notes from the Beagle Voyage. I am afraid this is going to take many more years than I planned. And now, to make matters worse, I am starting to get these awful stomach pains which lay me up for days at a time.

I am so sick, but I don't know why. Emma is so kind. She will sit with me and read to me. The sound of her voice calms me like nothing else. I am in so much pain.

EMMA

We now have two little ones, Will and Annie. This place here in London is too small for us, especially with Charley's experiments and papers spread throughout the house. We also are concerned about the horrible air here - so full of soot and smoke. And we think we found a place in Down county, just to the South of London, yet close enough that Charley can attend meetings in London.

DARWIN

The house in Down is not in very good condition, and we need to make some changes to the layout of the rooms. But once we make those changes, it will truly be our own. It is surrounded by orchards and meadows where we can take walks through the beautiful countryside and enjoy the fresh air.

The children give me so much pleasure. I started making notes as the children were born, noting everything I could observe about their development as they grow.

SCENE 12

Down House – an old cottage surrounded by gardens and orchards

EMMA

Our life in Down has been mostly a delight - excepting of course, for Charley's illnesses. But we now have three children. Our fourth, Sam, died only after one month.

Charley always is ready to play with the children, even when he is hard at work. We are so happy as a family - there is so much love between us all.

(Kew Gardens)

HOOKER

Darwin has finished his report on the Beagle Voyage - which has taken ten years. He is now embarking on a study of barnacles. And he will be publishing a major work that summarizes everything about barnacles. He says he is getting quite tired of them.

And all this, while he falls ill for weeks at a time, and can do nothing.

(Down House)

EMMA

We had gone to see one doctor after another, and not one of them seems to know what ails him. It is getting very frustrating.

12-2 Interlude

DARWIN

(lying down, in pain)

Ohh. I feel awful. This pain comes when I least expect it, and it does not go away for days, or even weeks at a time.

EMMA

We talked to all the doctors we knew, and none had any real solutions to Charley's stomach problems. We heard that others were helped by the water treatment that Dr. Gully in Malvern practices, and decided to see if this treatment would help at all.

SCENE 13

(Malvern)

DARWIN

(wrapped in a sheet)

Brr. This is a horrible feeling. I have to stay in this wet sheet, which is repeatedly doused with cold water. I can't believe this can help! But I need to stay with it.

DARWIN

This incredible discomfort at least makes me forget my stomach pains. But it is no good if there is no relief after I am finished with this.

EMMA

After several weeks, Charley was actually starting to feel better. He repeatedly tested himself, saying, "I think I am feeling better!" But he found it hard to believe because he could not see any reason why he should be better.

DARWIN

Despite all my doubts, I WAS better. But WHY?

EMMA

Charley was better for a while. But a month or so later, the pains returned.

SCENE 14

(Down House)

EMMA

As he finished his book on Barnacles - which has been eight years in the making, he also was working on what he calls 'His Species Book'. He says it is now over 200 pages already. And in addition, he has taken to study all kinds of breeding, from sheep to pigeons to plants.

(She writes him a letter)

Charley, I am writing you a letter because when I talk to you face to face I cannot say exactly what I wish.

You say you are uncertain about Christian Revelation but your opinion is still not formed. Faith is beyond our comprehension, not provable in the scientific way you like. I believe you sincerely wish to learn the truth.

But there are dangers in giving up Revelation and Christ's offer of eternal life. I know you will have patience with me. My fear is for the afterlife. I do not wish an answer. It is satisfaction for me just to write.

14 -0 I cannot say how happy

I cannot say how happy you make me
in this life and how dearly I love you.
There is nothing more that I could ask of you.
It is still my dream that we will be together through eternity.

Our life seems so short,
But we can hope for a time without end.

I cannot say how happy you make me in this life
And how dearly I love you.

I thank you for all the affection,
which makes my happiness more,
which makes my happiness more and more each day.

DARWIN

(In his study)

At last gleams of light have come. Contrary to the opinion I started with I am almost convinced that species are not immutable. (it is like confessing to a murder)

I think I have found the simple way by which species become adapted to new ends. I just need to support this with many more examples...

14 – 1a A Multitude of beings #

A multitude of beings
during an almost infinite lapse of time,
had their entire organization
modified in some degree.

Each slight change of structure
which was beneficial for survival
has been preserved.

14 - 2 The long-continued accumulation #

CHORUS

... the long-continued accumulation
of beneficial variations ...
led to structures as diversified,
as beautifully adapted for various purposes
and as excellently co-ordinated,
as we see in the animals and plants.

DARWIN

Can this be true?

WALLACE

Dear Mr. Darwin,

I am currently in the Malay peninsula, and I have been studying a variety of plants and animals in this area. I have made some observations about what I have seen here, which would seem to indicate that species can give rise to new species. I am enclosing a brief paper that I have entitled 'On the tendency of varieties to depart from the original type'. I would very much appreciate it if you would read this and let me know what you think.

Yours sincerely, Alfred Russel Wallace

DARWIN
(*after reading it,*)

This is essentially what I am proposing in my Species Book! But I am not ready to publish it yet! He has the same idea that I do, and if he publishes this, he will get all the credit! I will be accused of just copying him. What will I do?

I need advice. I will write Lyell and Hooker.

(*Kew Gardens*)

HOOKER

We decided that the best solution would be for Darwin and Wallace to jointly present a paper on the topic, before either publishes anything. Although Darwin had spoken to us about his ideas, he had not published anything on the subject. He was concerned that Wallace would think he is trying to get part of Wallace's credit.

But Wallace was delighted with this proposal. Having Darwin's name on the paper gave it more credibility since he did not have the reputation that Darwin already had in the scientific community.

When the time came for the paper to be read, Darwin came down with his stomach pains sending him to bed for days and he could do nothing. So I agreed that I would read the paper for him.

The paper I read at the Society's meeting made very clear that change occurs by a selection process that is due to demands of the environment, and not by some divine plan. There was hardly any reaction to this by the members of the Society. This paper was later published in the proceedings, and one barely heard anything about it.

(Down House)

DARWIN

However, this encouraged me to move ahead on my planned book. Despite frequent bouts of my stomach ailment, which would put me out of commission for weeks at a time, I started serious work on my Species book.

SCENE 16

WALLACE

(reading a letter)

Dear Wallace,

You ask how I am... We have just suffered through the death of our dear daughter who was only ten years old. And yet I work every day with groans and sighs, chipping away at the mountain of facts I have compiled. Oh, I am dull as a fig. Before that I had five pretty good days and before that I spent fully a third of my time in bed.

Like Croesus I am overwhelmed by my riches of facts and fear my book will prove to be nothing but an empty puffball. Ever since my voyage on the Beagle the course of my life has been set: to unravel the mysteries of all those strange and funny little facts after my own heart that bear on the place of each species in the economy of Nature, giving rise to speculation on the meaning of it all.

Best wishes for your continued researches,

Charles Darwin

(Down House)

16 - 1 This strikes me with wonder #

DARWIN

This strikes me with wonder.

Both in space and time, we seem to be brought somewhat near to that great fact – that mystery of mysteries – the first appearance of new beings on earth.

HOOKER

(Kew Gardens)

Evolution gradually became accepted by many people, especially those of us in the sciences. However, Darwin is proposing a revolutionary idea – It is not according to a divine plan, but it occurs through a natural process over long periods of time, where certain traits are strengthened through generations of reproduction, and other features are weakened.

16 - 3 Pain #

DARWIN

Pain. Pain.
That is the part that makes no sense.
If a loving God created all this, why all this pain?
Why suffering?

We behold the face of nature
bright with gladness,
with an abundance of food.

The birds are singing around us.
They live on insects or seeds,
and are destroying life;
or we forget how these songsters
or their eggs, or their nestlings,
are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey.

That there is much suffering in the world
no one disputes.
Some have attempted to explain this
in reference to man
by imagining that it serves for his moral improvement.
But the number of men in the world
is as nothing compared with that
of all other sentient beings,

and these often suffer greatly
without any moral improvement.

Pain. Pain. That is the part that makes no sense.

DARWIN

look at such instincts
as the young cuckoo
ejecting its foster-brother,
-ants making slaves,
-the larvae of ichneumonidae feeding
within the bodies of caterpillars,

-not as specially endowed or created instincts,
but as small consequences
of one general law,
leading to the advancement of all organic beings,
namely, multiply, vary, let the strongest live.
The existence of suffering
makes no sense in the case of an
intelligent first cause.

16 - 4 But the presence of suffering #

DARWIN

But the presence of suffering
agrees well with the view
that all organic beings
have been developed
through variation and natural selection.

16 – 5 Interlude

SCENE 17

(Down House)

EMMA

Charley, I just finished reading your manuscript for the Species book. I have to agree that it is well argued and full of information that makes it impossible to refute. Although very well done, I do not like it - because it pushes God farther off.

DARWIN

But Emma, the evidence is clear. There is no logical reason for any divine plan whatsoever. And it pains me that it does not please you. How can I go on? I need you and your love.

EMMA

But Charley, you have me and you have my love. It does not end because we do not agree about some things...

17 - 1 The power of our love

EMMA

The power of our love can overcome our little differences.
Our love can heal any hurt.

DARWIN

Dear Emma,
Your gentleness gives me courage,
your tenderness gives me strength.
I could not live without you, my Emma.
The power of our love
Is always here to comfort us
Even when there are
Heartaches and pain.

DARWIN AND EMMA

The power of our love
Abides in understanding.
It is fragile but strong
When you hold me close.

Our love will never forsake us
Walking hand in hand
As long as we live.

Time can never diminish
The power of our love.
The power of our love.
(They embrace, holding one another.)

17-2 Coda

SCENE 18

HENSLOW

(Cambridge)

Darwin published the book that he called 'On the Origin of Species' in 1859, 23 years since he had returned from the Beagle voyage. He sent copies of his book to many eminent scientists: Charles Lyell himself, and then there was Richard Owen, the superintendent of the Natural History Museum, Hooker, Huxley, and myself. His notes made it clear that he was hoping that I would agree with him.

(Kew Gardens)

HOOKER

We were all amazed at how well the Species book sold. The first printing was sold out in a week, and there were orders coming from all over the world.

But, so were letters. Some were supportive, but most condemning him.

He so much wants people to respect him and to agree with his ideas, and he has been personally quite hurt by the general reaction.

HENSLOW

I have had the greatest respect for Darwin. I never doubted that he was a careful and honest scientist in all his work. Although the presence of evolution in both the plant and animal world was indisputable, it still seemed to me that it required an intelligent plan. And so I could only agree with Darwin so far and no farther.

SCENE 19

(Down House)

(Darwin is sick, holding his stomach and Emma is holding him in her lap.)

VOICES

(Offstage or from the chorus)

God created everything - just as it says in Genesis!

This is all God's plan. You are just trying to kill God!

You are going to Hell, Darwin.

This is pure evil. This is the work of Satan.

DARWIN

These letters, although not pleasant, did not surprise me. The Bible still was the scientific authority for many lay people. But I was hoping for a different response from the scientists that I respected. Professor Haeckel from Germany called it the law of 'higgeldy piggeldy'. Richard Owen called it the most unscientific paper he had ever read.

Oh, my stomach!

I am still hoping that the respected Charles Lyell will eventually come around to my way of thinking. He was the geologist that influenced my thinking more than anyone else.

SCENE 20

(Kew Gardens)

HOOKER

(reading a letter)

Dear Hooker,

Wallace asks whether I shall discuss man-- it is a subject so surrounded by prejudice I think I will avoid the whole topic entirely.

But how often am I made wroth by that arrogance which caused our forefathers to claim for man and God a special relation and to believe we are a product of a separate act of creation.

Our self-admiration--what trash! --blinds us to the fact that man and all vertebrate animals are constructed on the same model.

But animals we have made our slaves, we do not like to consider our equals-- do not slave holders wish to make the black man have other mind?

--But animals, our fellow brethren in pain and suffering, they know fear and affection, respect and sorrow in death--why should we think ourselves better?

No, Hooker, it is obvious, we are all netted together. Our ancestors came from the sea, breathed water, had a swim bladder, and a great swimming tail, their skulls were imperfectly formed, and each had the organs of both sexes. Here is a pleasant genealogy for men!

The world, it has often been remarked, appears as if it had long been preparing for the advent of man: and this, in one sense is strictly true, for he owes his birth to a long line of progenitors. If any link in this chain had never existed, we would not be what we are today.

Man is not God, nor a child of God--our end will come under the present form; like any animal we act and are acted upon by organic and inorganic agents of the earth.

Dear Hooker, I so much thank you for your support,

Charles

(Down House)

DARWIN

As soon as I had become, in the year 1837 or 1838, convinced that species were mutable productions, I could not avoid the belief that man must come under the same law.

Man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system.

20-1 With all these exalted powers #

-- with all these exalted powers –
-- Man still bears in his bodily frame
the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.

And we need not be ashamed of it.

No one can study any living thing,
however humble,
without being struck with enthusiasm
at its marvelous structure
and properties.

20-2 Interlude

SCENE 21

(Darwin is now sitting at his desk.)

DARWIN

I had gradually come to see that the Old Testament from its manifestly false history of the world, with the Tower of Babel, the rainbow as a sign, etc., etc., and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos, or the beliefs of any barbarian.

I could not believe that any sane man could believe in the miracles by which Christianity is supported,—that the more we know of the fixed laws of nature the more incredible do miracles become,—that the men at that time were ignorant and credulous to a degree almost incomprehensible by us, —by such reflections as these, I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation.

The rate was so slow that I felt no distress, and have never since doubted even for a single second that my conclusion was correct.

The old argument of design in nature, as given by Paley, which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, fails, now that the law of natural selection has been discovered.

We can no longer argue that, for instance, the beautiful hinge of a bivalve shell must have been made by an intelligent being, like the hinge of a door by man. There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows.

Everything in nature is the result of fixed laws.

WALLACE

When I returned to England from my work abroad, Darwin and I stayed in close contact, since we had largely the same views.

And when his 'Descent of Man' book was published, there was a huge outcry - that man is not special! The papers published cartoons and drawings of Darwin as a monkey. When Huxley debated the Reverend Wilberforce, Wilberforce could cite scriptures about man being created in the image of God. But he really did not know anything about the natural world, knowledge which Huxley had at his fingertips.

(Down House)

(Darwin is reading letters. As he reads each, we hear the voices of the letter writers.)

VOICE 1

To Charles Darwin; You are all wrong about this. I come from a long line of human beings. As the bible says, we are different from monkeys and all the other animals because we have a soul. You probably don't, which is why you look so monkey-like.

DARWIN

Emma!

VOICE 2

God created man in his own image! God did not create the animals and plants in his own image. Do you understand that? That is the bible that tells us. What you say is just evil because you are obviously made in the image of Satan!

EMMA

You called?

DARWIN

Emma, I am not feeling well.

EMMA

Just lie down and I will read to you.

EMMA

You just have to calm your mind. Charley, I love you,
and I will take care of you.

EMMA

(reads)

*My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man...*

21 -1 interlude - and her voice gradually fades.)

SCENE 22

HOOKER

Lyell published a paper in which he said that although he saw natural selection as being on target for the animal kingdom, he felt that humans had a separate beginning, and not subject to the same evolution as all other beings. The publication of this paper made Darwin ill for several weeks.

(Down House)

EMMA

I know about all the damning letters Charley receives. It hurts. He so wants to be respected. It is a mystery how gentle and humble he is, and yet how resilient in ways I do not understand.

But it is the family that we have here at Down. Seven children now living. Two died in infancy, and of course, our beloved Annie who we loved so much. And there are the dogs and the rabbits and goats.

SCENE 23

DARWIN

I have lived a long life. And I've not been sick quite so much lately, the way I used to. But I know I am declining - I can't walk for very long anymore. And I get these dizzy spells and heart palpitations. I seem to be satisfied with just sitting by the garden for most of the day...

I've had many health problems, but I've been so fortunate in my life - I have such a loving wife and children - nothing could replace them.

I've not been loved by everyone - but I am thankful that I have had the close friends that I have - Hooker, Wallace, Henslow, Lyell, Huxley, and many more - they have been so good and generous to me.

Many have asked me how I could go on with all the criticism from so many. And so many are hateful of my views. It is not easy to explain.

If everyone could see what I have seen.

I have examined birds, insects, plants of all types and I have seen how the same plans emerge over and over. I have seen how they are all connected. This fills me with deep admiration.

Picture an entangled bank, clothed with plants of many kinds, with birds singing in the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth. And realize that these elaborately constructed beings - so different from each other, and yet they are dependent on each other. This moves me with amazement.

And I have seen how the present is connected to the past. Everything on earth - insects, plants, animals, even the rocks are connected to those of the distant past, beyond our imagining of time - and this includes ourselves.

This earth and everything that is in it; this is our home. We are a part of all these things.

23 - 1 If you could see what I have seen #

If you could see what I have seen:
How beautiful.
How magical it is that all living things
Are connected.
And I have seen how we, we amazing
human beings are connected to all life.
We are not separate; we are part of everything else.
We are all family.
And it is this family that I love.
And to love the earth is to be in love with life.

There is grandeur in this view of life,
with its several powers,
having been originally breathed
into a few forms or into one;

CHORUS AND DARWIN

and while this planet has gone cycling on
according to the fixed law of gravity,
from so simple a beginning
endless forms
most beautiful and most wonderful,
most beautiful and most wonderful
have evolved,
and are evolving still.

DARWIN

Life is fragile, but it continues on. Oh, Life is Strong!
(After singing, Darwin clutches his chest in pain.)

23-2 Interlude – (at Down – there is a darkness to the place)

SCENE 24

EMMA

We both knew that the end was near. His heart was giving
him frequent pains. And he would cough up blood that
stained his beard.

Frank, Henrietta, and Bessy were home and they tried to
help when they could. They would sit by his bedside so I
could get some rest.

He had a strong attack at midnight, but I gave him some
brandy, which seemed to revive him. So I went to bed.

Henrietta called me at three in the morning that he had
fainted, so I gave him three teaspoons of whiskey. I
stayed by his bedside until morning ... when his
breathing stopped. I was struck by the silence.
Breathing is so soft; but when it stops: The silence.

24 -1 interlude (Emma puts on a black shawl)

EMMA

We had a rough hewn, simple casket made, and we planned
that we both would be buried here in Down. But as word
of his death got to London, there was a movement among
society there, that he should not be buried in a simple
village grave.

And so a carriage arrived with a black shiny casket pulled by six black horses to take his body to be buried in Westminster Abbey - next to Isaac Newton.

I watched as the carriage took him away to London. I tried not to cry. I knew that this was such an honor.

I did not go to the service. That was no place for my grief.

I had hoped that the two of us would be buried together here in Down. I had hoped...

WALLACE

Huxley, Hooker, and myself were among those who carried his casket into the Abbey. Darwin's dear friends and mentors, Henslow and Lyell have been gone for several years now. But we all admired him so.

HOOKER

Even in his most detailed writings you saw that he not only focused his thinking on the subject, but also, it was as if he had great affection and sympathy for everything. Because for him, thinking and feeling were one.

In science, we try to avoid the word love - but he was surrounded by it. His family, Emma, his friends, but more than that - he loved the earth.

EMMA

I guess I always wished that he would come to my view of God. But he never once tried to convince me of his views.

I know he will be remembered for his work, but to me, who he was was really the important thing - that he was such a gentle, kind and loving person, and truly was searching, sincerely, for the truth.

24 - 2 Finale (she begins to sing, but cannot continue...)

The power of our love abides in understand...

(Emma weeps into her handkerchief. Then turns weeping with her back to the audience.)

CHORUS

Time can never diminish
The power of our love,
The power of our love.

(The lights gradually dim and are down when the chorus finishes.)

END