

The Royal Shakespeare Company Synopsis of  
Matilda, the Musical  
Act One

As a chorus of children boast "My mummy says I'm a miracle" the ballroom-dancing obsessed T.V. addict Mrs. Wormwood gives birth to a baby girl called Matilda. Whilst the doctor professes Matilda the most beautiful child he has ever seen Mrs. Wormwood is more worried about a dancing-contest she has missed and Mr. Wormwood, a dodgy used-car salesman, dismisses the child as "an ugly little thing".

Five years later Matilda lives an unhappy existence with Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood and her older, gormless brother Michael. At only five years old Matilda can already read and gets through several books a week. The Wormwoods are oblivious to Matilda's gift and frequently mock and verbally abuse her. Matilda, who believes that anything that's not right must be put right, realises that sometimes, to make things right, you have to be a little bit 'Naughty'; so she swaps her father's hair oil for her mother's hydrogen peroxide, leaving Mr. Wormwood with bright green hair.

At the local library Matilda, who frequently entertains the librarian, Mrs. Phelps, with exciting tales, begins to tell Mrs. Phelps a new story about an extraordinary Acrobat and Escapologist; internationally famous they are beloved by all and wow crowds with their daring performances. The Acrobat and Escapologist long to have a child but have been unable to conceive. To distract themselves from their sadness the pair announce to the world press that they will be performing an exciting and dangerous new act: "The Burning Woman Hurling Through The Air With Dynamite In Her Hair, Over Sharks and Spiky Objects Caught By The Man Locked In The Cage".

The next day is Matilda's first day at school. Her teacher, Miss Honey, is immediately impressed by Matilda's precociousness and ability, so she resolves to recommend that Matilda is moved to the top class with the older children. However, the headmistress, Miss Trunchbull (a cruel and sadistic disciplinarian and former hammer-throwing world champion, who firmly believes in the school motto: "Baminotomus Est Maggitum" -- Children Are Maggots), dismisses Miss Honey's suggestion and lectures her on the importance of adhering strictly to "The Rules".

Back at the Wormwood household, Mr. Wormwood is frustrated that a group of wealthy Russians didn't fall for his lies about a number of worn-down old cars he had been trying to sell them at exorbitant prices. He takes his frustration out on Matilda and destroys one of her library books; prompting her to put superglue around the rim of his hat.

At school, Matilda learns about Miss Trunchbull's cruel punishments, including Chokey, a tiny, dank cupboard with broken glass and nails in the walls and floor that she locks naughty children in for hours on end. Matilda soon witnesses Trunchbull's wickedness firsthand when the furious headmistress spins a small girl around by her pigtails and throws her across the playing field.

Meanwhile, Miss Honey decides to pay the Wormwoods a visit to express her recommendation that Matilda be put in an advanced class. She meets Mrs. Wormwood and her faux-Italian

balroom-dance partner Rudolpho. It soon becomes apparent to Miss Honey that Mrs. Wormwood couldn't care less about her daughter's advanced intelligence and Mrs. Wormwood mocks Miss Honey's interest in books and intellect over television and make-up. Alone outside the Wormwood household, Miss Honey is desperate to help Matilda.

Matilda tells Mrs. Phelps more about the Acrobat and the Escapologist. The performance of their new feat has been arranged by the Acrobat's sister, a former world champion hammer-thrower who loves to scare small children. Just before their act begins the Escapologist announces that the performance will be cancelled as the Acrobat is pregnant. The crowd is thrilled, but the Acrobat's sister is furious at the prospect of refunding the crowd's money and produces a contract that the Acrobat and Escapologist have signed binding them to performing the act or else spending the rest of their lives in jail.

At school, Bruce Bogtrotter, a boy in Matilda's class, has stolen a slice of Miss Trunchbull's personal chocolate cake. When she discovers this, she decides to punish Bruce by forcing him to eat an entire cake all by himself in front of the class, who bravely support him. After Bruce has finished the cake, the class celebrates his success but Miss Trunchbull drags Bruce away for the second part of his punishment: Chokey.

Act Two

During the interval, Mr. Wormwood appears with a disclaimer, apologising for the show's rampant support for reading and warns children that if they do read they will go blind, become smelly and get verrucas (of the mind). He then introduces what he considers to be "the pinnacle of man's success and the reason we evolved out of unicorns in the first place": television.

After the 'Entr'acte,' the children sing about their future, Miss Honey laments and Matilda resolves to put an end to Miss Trunchbull's cruelty. Lavender, a girl in Matilda's class, confides in the audience that, after being given the job of preparing Miss Trunchbull's jug of water, she found a newt and put it in the jug.

Matilda tells Mrs. Phelps more about the Acrobat and the Escapologist. Bound to their contract they perform the feat and all seems to go well until the last moment when the Acrobat slips and falls to the ground breaking every bone in her body; she lives just long enough to give birth to a beautiful baby girl. The Acrobat's sister soon moves into the house with the Escapologist and his daughter. She is incredibly cruel to the little girl, forcing her to do menial tasks and frequently abusing her verbally and physically, but the Escapologist is too saddened by his wife's death to notice.

Mr. Wormwood returns home from work delighted that he has been able to sell the worn-down cars to the wealthy Russians after all after hitting on a plan to use an automatic drill to wind back the odometers on the cars, seemingly reducing the mileage. Matilda is annoyed at her father's flagrant deceit and tells him off for it. This angers Mr. Wormwood and he verbally abuses Matilda before locking her in her bedroom. That night Matilda continues the story of the Acrobat and the Escapologist on her own. After years of cruelty the Acrobat's sister's fits of rage have grown to the point that, one night, she beats the Escapologist's daughter, tells her she is a "worthless maggot" and locks her in the basement. However that evening the Escapologist

returns home early and hears his daughter crying in the basement. He breaks down the door and discovers the extent of the Acrobat's Sister's cruelty. As he comforts his daughter he promises her he will always be there for her from now on, as his wife had made him promise on her deathbed. Filled with a sudden rage, he runs out into the night to find the Acrobat's sister, but is never seen again.

The next day, Miss Trunchbull forces Miss Honey's class to participate in a grueling physical education lesson. When she goes to drink from her water jug, she discovers the newt inside and immediately accuses the first child she lays eyes on. Matilda stands up and tells Miss Trunchbull off for being a bully. Trunchbull launches into a tirade of abuse against Matilda, but Matilda retreats in her mind to a place where everything is 'Quiet' and discovers she has the ability to move objects with her mind. With her newfound ability, she tips over the Trunchbull's water jug, soaking her in water and newt. Later on, Matilda demonstrates her powers to Miss Honey. Taken aback, Miss Honey invites Matilda back to her house for a cup of tea and a conversation.

Miss Honey's house turns out to be nothing more than an old farm shed. Matilda discovers that Miss Honey has been forced to live in abject poverty by her cruel and abusive aunt, who looked after her as a child when her parents died. When Miss Honey first got her job as a teacher, the aunt produced a bill of every meal and drink Miss Honey had ever had as a child, as well as any other conceivable expense, and forced Miss Honey to sign a contract binding her to pay it all back. Despite all this, Miss Honey manages to find a simple beauty in her meagre living conditions. As Miss Honey tells her story, Matilda soon realises that the story of the Acrobat and the Escapologist is the story of Miss Honey's childhood, and that the wicked aunt is Miss Trunchbull, who murdered the Acrobat, Miss Honey's father.

Miss Trunchbull, at her cruellest, has built many, many more Chokeys and forces the children to participate in a spelling test; anyone who fails to spell a word properly is sent to Chokey. As she discovers the children have been taught well by Miss Honey, Trunchbull begins to invent words to force the children into Chokey. But Matilda uses her powers to make a piece of chalk write on the blackboard and make Miss Trunchbull believe that it is the ghost of Miss Honey's father demanding that the Trunchbull give his daughter her inheritance and the family home and run away. This causes the Trunchbull to run from the school screaming, and the children celebrate their new found anarchic freedom.

At the library, Miss Honey and Matilda tell Mrs. Phelps about the aftermath of the events; a few days after the Trunchbull ran away, Miss Honey received a letter from a solicitor saying that her father's will had mysteriously been found and all his money and his house was left to her. Miss Trunchbull was never seen by anyone ever again, and Miss Honey became the new headmistress of the school. The Wormwoods arrive at the library in a panic telling Matilda that she has to leave with them now as they are running away to Spain. It transpires that the wealthy Russians Mr. Wormwood was dealing with were in fact the Russian Mafia who are not at all happy about being sold broken cars. Miss Honey asks if Matilda can stay with her, but before a decision can be made, the Mafia arrive. Sergei, the head of the Mafia, is impressed and moved by Matilda's intellect and respect, and he agrees to forgive the Wormwoods and leave them unharmed once he has got his money back.

A grateful Mr. Wormwood thanks Matilda and agrees to let her live in happiness with Miss Honey.

Musical Numbers

Act One

Miracle - The Company  
Naughty - Matilda  
School Song - Children and Company  
Pathetic - Miss Honey  
The Hammer - Miss Trunchbull  
Naughty (Reprise) - Matilda  
The Chokey Chant - The Company  
Loud - Mrs Wormwood, Rudolpho  
This Little Girl - Miss Honey  
Bruce - Children

Act Two

When I Grow Up - Children, Miss Honey, Matilda  
I'm Here - Escapologist, Matilda, Acrobat's Daughter  
The Smell of Rebellion - Miss Trunchbull and Children  
Quiet - Matilda  
My House - Miss Honey  
Revolting Children - Children  
Perhaps A Child - Sergei

Cast

Matilda Wormwood  
Miss Trunchbull  
Miss Honey  
Mr Wormwood  
Mrs Wormwood  
Michael Wormwood  
Mrs Phelps  
Cook

The Escapologist  
Sergei  
Henchmen  
Henchwoman  
The Acrobat  
Teacher/Doctor  
Rudolpho

Bruce

Lavender

Amanda

Nigel

Eric

Alice

Hortensia

Tommy

Reginald