

Song Title: **CHEER UP CHARLIE**

REVIEWERS' NOTE

Reevaluation: Sep 19, 2024: change from Yes to **YES: Note**

This song is admissible because there are no issues with its lyrics and message. It was written for the 1971 film [Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory](#), which is one of the film adaptations of Roald Dahl's 1964 book [Charlie and the Chocolate Factory](#). This book presents racially problematic issues.

Below are "Key Takeways" listed at the top of [Willy Wonka: The Controversial Truth Behind the Oompa Loompas \(cbr.com\)](#), followed by a quote from the piece:

- The Oompa Loompas in Willy Wonka's chocolate factory had origins rooted in racism, colonialism, and white supremacy.
- While all three movies based on Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* attempted to address the issues with the Oompa Loompas, Wonka (2023) does so most effectively.
- Still, it is important for audiences to look beyond Wonka's "world of pure imagination" and be aware of the implications of the original text.

Traces of slavery, white supremacy, and capitalistic exploitation existed in every corner — hidden in the plain sight of a lighthearted, magical factory. The issue stems from Dahl's book, and all three movie adaptations have taken steps to address those dynamics, with varying degrees of success.

In the first edition of Dahl's novel, Oompa Loompas were Black pygmies Willy Wonka imported from "the deepest and darkest part of the African jungle," according to [Jeremy Treglown's Roald Dahl: A Biography](#). In 1970, the NAACP issued a statement expressing concerns about the racist portrayal of the Oompa Loompas in light of the then-upcoming film. Dahl himself showed sympathy for their stance and re-imagined them in the 1973 edition as having "golden-brown hair" and "rosy-white" skin." The article goes on to discuss how the Oompa Loompas have been characterized in the movie adaptations of the book.

See also [How Wonka Handles the Controversial History of Roald Dahl's Oompa-Loompas](#)

Roald Dahl is also considered controversial because of his openly antisemitic views. See [Roald Dahl Museum says author's racism was 'undeniable'](#) and [Anti-racism statement - Roald Dahl Museum & Story Centre](#).

GENERAL NOTE RE: Innocuous Songs from Problematic Movies/Musicals or Source Material/Author

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What year was this song written? 1971

Who wrote the lyrics? Anthony Newley

What did your research tell you about the lyricist?

Anthony Newley was an English actor, singer, songwriter, and filmmaker. He achieved success as a performer in such diverse fields as rock and roll and stage and screen acting. As a recording artist, his recordings reached the Top 40 chart on a dozen occasions between 1959 and 1962, including two number one hits. Newley received an Academy Award nomination for the film score of *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*.

The Guinness Book of British Hit Singles & Albums described Newley as "among the most innovative UK acts of the early rock years before moving into musicals and cabaret". Newley was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1989.

What other material has been written by this lyricist?

As a songwriter, he won the 1963 Grammy Award for Song of the Year for "What Kind of Fool Am I?", but he was also well known for "Gonna Build a Mountain", "Once in a Lifetime", "On a Wonderful Day Like Today", "Who Can I Turn To?", "The Joker," and comic novelty songs such as "That Noise" and "The Oompa-Loompa Song", and his versions of "Strawberry Fair" and "Pop Goes the Weasel". He wrote songs that others made hits including "Goldfinger" (the title song of the James Bond film, *Goldfinger*, music by John Barry), and "Feeling Good", which became a hit for Nina Simone and the rock band Muse, as well as a signature song for singer Michael Bublé.

Who is the composer of this song? Walter Scharf

What did your research tell you about the composer?

Emmy- and Golden Globe-winner and ten-time Oscar-nominee Walter Scharf was born and raised in New York City, the son of Polish-Jewish immigrants. He started playing music at an early age, helping his uncle play the piano in theaters for silent films. His mother Bessie Zwerling was a well-known comedian in New York's Yiddish theater. He got his first real Broadway gig at the age of 17, orchestrating George Gershwin's "Girl Crazy." Later he worked as a session musician in the early years of recording, along with Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey and Jimmy Dorsey. He took his earnings and studied at New York University, even spending a year and a half studying in Berlin, witnessing the rise of the Nazis in 1932. Throughout the 1930s he wrote music for over a dozen films, mostly without receiving screen credit. His first Oscar nomination came for the score of *Mercy Island* (1941), and his film music career continued through six decades

What other material has been written by this composer?

A ten-time Oscar nominee, Scharf worked on more than 100 films, receiving nominations for his musical direction on such pictures as Danny Kaye's Hans Christian Andersen (1952), Barbra Streisand's Funny Girl (1968) and Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory (1971).

In the early 1960s, he was approached by Harold Lloyd to provide new scores for his silent film compilations. Lloyd regarded Scharf's ability to mix comedy themes with big, dramatic orchestral touches as ideal for his brand of 'thrill' comedy.

Scharf implemented a similar style for the Jerry Lewis Jekyll and Hyde-inspired comedy The Nutty Professor in (1963), working on more than a dozen Lewis comedies overall. He worked on three Elvis Presley pictures including Loving You (1957) and King Creole (1958), and with lyricist Don Black, he wrote the hit Michael Jackson single from the film Ben (1972), which won him a Golden Globe; and scored the popular Walking Tall (1973) and its two sequels. In 1973, he and Don Black wrote the music and lyrics for the London musical Maybe That's Your Problem (book by Lionel Chetwynd).

Please provide a link to the original song lyrics. [Cheer Up, Charlie | Warner Bros. Entertainment Wiki](#)

Who and what is this song about, as originally intended by the composer and earlier performers?

This song is a love song from a mother to her son to encourage him to be positive during hard times

What did you learn about the history OF THE SONG?

The song was made popular (though not that popular) by the 1971 film "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. It has been lightly sampled by a few artists and also re-released by a small handful of artists primarily since 2010. It was not performed in blackface as far as my research indicates.

Additional Recordings:

Vocal Spectrum July 2008 A cappella

Rebecca Martin August 31, 2010

Leslie Odom Jr. August 12, 2014

instrumental:

Eric Hofbauer 2012

Kevin Fort November 2014

Ken Peplowski, Julian Marc Stringle, The Craig Milverton Trio 2015

Ken Peplowski February 2016

Curtis Brothers Quartet 2017

Tom Kubis December 14, 2019

Share a link to the earliest performance of this song that you can find.

[Cheer Up, Charlie \(From "Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory" Soundtrack\)](#)

Does any illustration or other characteristic of the original sheet music reflect an inappropriate theme? No

Please explain why the illustrations in the sheet music ARE or ARE NOT problematic. no illustration found for this song / sheet music is now all digital and nothing original seems to be online

Did this song, originally or subsequently, demean a marginalized racial/ethnic group (a group considered at a social disadvantage) through idiomatic expressions, metaphors, jargon, or message? And/or does the song present a sanitized/idyllic or false narrative regarding the American South and the life of the enslaved or newly freed OR of other marginalized racial/ethnic groups and their history? No

Please supply the links to any sources you used for this section of research.

<https://secondhandsongs.com/work/155196/all#nav-entity> ,
https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0770127/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm ,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Newley
https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0627969/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm
https://wonka.fandom.com/wiki/Cheer_Up,_Charlie
https://warnerbros.fandom.com/wiki/Cheer_Up,_Charlie

Additional Questions to Consider (do not pertain to Admissibility)

The remaining questions pertain to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion issues other than those of race. As such, **THESE QUESTIONS DO NOT AFFECT A SONG'S ADMISSIBILITY**. They are provided to encourage your group to consider factors that may affect members of your audience and/or your performers with regard to religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and more. ***Please refer to the Music Choices section of Chapter Choices to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*** (in the ***Chorus Toolkit***) ***for details and strategies related to these factors.***

Could the message/lyrics of the song, original or subsequent, limit any singer or audience member's ability to engage, related to the following? A YES answer does not imply that the song is demeaning or exclusionary. [Please see instructions here.](#)

Age: No
Disability: No
Gender: No
Religion: No
Sexual Orientation: No
Visible Physical Difference: No
Other? No

Are there any adjustments to the lyrics that would make it more inclusive or current to our chorus culture or societal norms?

No, I did not identify any lyrics that might be addressed.

Final Questions

Are there any other comments you want to provide or is there other information you think might be useful about this song?

A lovely song from a parent to a child. I did notice that Jim referenced a different lyricist in his sheet music, but I believe this to be a co-writer who isn't credited by the studio in my research. That said, I

can provide additional information for this lyricist if needed. here is a link to his bio:
https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0108634/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm