

# *Peter Pan*

or  
*the boy who wouldn't grow up*



Detail from the design by Charles A. Buchel for the first production of *Peter Pan*, 1904

## Introduction

For most people, the world's first encounter with 'the boy who wouldn't grow up' came in 1904 at the Duke of York's Theatre, London. J.M. Barrie's wonderful stage play debuted here in time for Christmas (after a delayed start as some of the numerous and extravagant stage effects were not ready on time). The reaction from all quarters was that it was a resounding success.

J.M Barrie (1860-1937) was already an established novelist and playwright even before writing *Peter Pan*. Born in Scotland, he moved to London to develop his career and it was there that he met the Llewelyn Davis family who were to provide the inspiration for his most famous and enduring play.

He met the Llewelyn Davis boys in 1897 whilst walking his dog in Kensington Gardens and made friends with them and their mother, Sylvia (daughter of Gerald du Maurier), and began to make up stories to keep them entertained. Following the death of their parents at a young age, Barrie became their guardian and trustee, along with their maternal grandmother, and paternal uncle in 1910.

*Peter Pan* began life as on of a selection of short stories, *The Little White Bird* published by Barrie in 1902. These were all stories which developed from those told to the Llewelyn Davis boys. The stories of Neverland and the adventures of Peter and the Lost Boys eventually became a full stage play, *Peter Pan*, first staged in 1904 – and repeated almost every year since across the world, during the Christmas period, This is a testament to its popularity and universal themes which, just like Peter, have failed to grow old.

Since the play was first produced, a number of publications have emerged, following the exploits of Peter. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* was published 1906, derived from *The Little White Bird*, originally published four years earlier, showing the increased demand for all things Peter Pan following the production of the stage play.

Following this, *The Peter Pan Picture Book* was published in 1907 as a purely children's book, the earlier version being more of an adults' drawing room book. The full version which is often seen today was originally titled *Peter and Wendy* and was published in 1911, with many abridged versions appearing over time, with the name changing fairly quickly to *Peter Pan* to match the stage production.

Possibly due to the continuing changes to the play, it was not until 1929 that the script was finally published in its full form. One of the major changes was the addition of a final chapter, included in the 1911 text *Peter Pan and Wendy*, first included on stage in 1908. An additional book: *When Wendy Grew Up: an afterthought* describes what happened when Peter returned from Neverland to take Wendy away, to find her grown up, married and with a daughter, Jane, of her own. Peter instead takes Jane with him, and eventually her daughter too.

In 1929, the same year the script was published, Barrie gave the copyright for *Peter Pan* to Great Ormond Street Hospital, Britain's leading children's hospital at the time. He stated that the value of this gift should never be disclosed. Since this date they have been able to use the royalties from productions of the play and publications of the various texts to support their work with sick children.

## CASE ONE

A selection of printed texts indicating the popularity of the story of *Peter Pan*; these all come from the Mander & Mitchenson Collection.

- 1) *Peter and Wendy* by J.M. Barrie  
Inscription inside “Owned by Jean Webster Brough / Christmas 1911 / with love from Hatton Toye”  
Printed by T. and A. Constable, Edinburgh University Press, 1911
- 2) *The Story of Peter Pan: retold by Daniel O’Connor from the Fairy Play by Sir J.M. Barrie*  
Illustrated by Alice B. Woodward  
Inscribed “Raymond Mander, Leeds, May 1939  
London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1920
- 3) *When Wendy Grew Up: an afterthought* by J.M. Barrie  
Nelson, 1957
- 4) *Peter Pan and Wendy* abridged by May Byron  
Illustrated by Mabel Lucie Attwell.  
Inscribed “To Anna Neagle as Peter Pan 1937-1938. London Palladium.”  
Signed by the actors playing the Lost Boys  
London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921

The original novelisation, and repeated publications, of J.M. Barrie’s most famous and enduring play *Peter Pan* indicates the popularity of this story and the desire for both children and adults to own the story and read it again and again.

First published, by Hodder and Stoughton, in 1911 as *Peter and Wendy*, the story is still available today – indeed in many more versions, including numerous abridged and illustrated children’s books, including one by Disney to accompany their film, which was the highest grossing film of 1953. The script of the play itself was not published until 1929.

The novel was first abridged (with Barrie’s blessing) by May Byron in 1915, with a later edition illustrated by Mabel Lucie Attwell in 1921 (seen here). The title of this book became *Peter Pan and Wendy* and today most publications are simply shortened to *Peter Pan*.

*Peter and Wendy* follows the story of the play closely, although has an additional final chapter, looking at what happened “When Wendy Grew Up”. This was also published as a separate story under that title, and later was generally included in

the play as well. This tells the story of Peter returning to Wendy when she has grown up and instead takes her daughter, and then her granddaughter off to Neverland instead, continuing the story indefinitely and truly giving the impression that Peter never will grow up.

## CASE TWO

**1. Costumes for *Peter Pan***

**Two tunics believed to have been used by Mary Martin in the 1954 American production, which was telecast and revised on stage**

**2. Programme for *Peter Pan***

**Mary Martin starring in the San Francisco Civic Light Opera Association production, Curran Theatre, 1954.**

Mary Martin (1913-1990) played the lead role in a musical version of *Peter Pan* on Broadway in 1954. This was subsequently telecast live on NBC in America. For many Americans Martin became synonymous with the character, although she was already a famous singer, dancer and actress before she took on this role, for which she won a Tony for the Broadway production and an Emmy for the television production.

## CASE THREE

### Shelf 1 – *Peter Pan*, Bristol Old Vic, 1984/5

1. Programme for a Gala Performance of *Peter Pan* given on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December 1984 in the presence of Her Grace the Duchess of Beaufort, in aid of the Bristol Children's Help Society Centenary Appeal
2. Programme for *Peter Pan*, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1984 – 9<sup>th</sup> February 1985
3. Production photographs, showing Richard Huw as Peter Pan and Mark Buffery as Capt. James Hook  
Photographer: Derek Balmer
4. Prompt script, showing marked up script and directions for the staging of the 1984 Bristol Old Vic Company production

### Shelf 2

5. Playgoers' Club "Peter Pan Dinner", Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1912; attended by J.M. Barrie. Signed menu; table plan and programme of music
6. Six photo postcards of the first production of *Peter Pan*, 1904  
Starring Nina Boucicault as Peter Pan, Gerald du Maurier as Mr Darling/Capt Hook, Dorothea Baird as Mrs Darling, and Hilda Trevelyan as Wendy, with Arthur Lupino as Nana
7. Dry point etching: Statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, by Rowland Langmaid. The statue is a bronze by Sir George Frampton (1860-1928), it was erected in 1912 in the location chosen by J.M. Barrie
8. Set model of the Pirate Ship, from Act V, Scene 1 of *Peter Pan*, by George Harris, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century

### Shelf 3 – Selection of programmes

9. Prince's Theatre, Bristol, 1907 and 1924
10. Bristol Hippodrome, 1950
11. Bristol Hippodrome, musical, 1988
12. *Peter Pan on Ice*, Wembley Empire Pool, 1962
13. Bristol Hippodrome: 1986-7 starring Bonnie Langford as Peter Pan; 1995 starring Toyah Wilcox as Peter Pan
14. *Golden Years of Peter Pan* booklet produced in aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital
15. Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican, 1982

## ON WALLS

### **Lithograph: *Peter Pan*, Duke of York's, 1904, designer Chas. A. Buchel**

This poster design is for the opening production of J.M. Barrie's most famous play. The Illustrated London News said in its review of 28<sup>th</sup> November "the playwright himself makes-believe unflaggingly in an artfully artless, go-as-you-please play which has all the pretty inconsequence of an imaginative child's improvisation, all the wild extravagance of a youngster's dream". This production starred Miss Nina Boucicault as Peter, Gerald Du Maurier and Miss Dorothea Baird as Mr and Mrs Darling, and Miss Hilda Trevelyan as Wendy.

### **Posters for productions of *Peter Pan***

- 1) *Peter Pan*, Scala Theatre, 1952
- 2) *Peter Pan*, Bristol Hippodrome, 2011

Along with the original design for the first production, these posters help to indicate the enduring nature of *Peter Pan* as a stage production. In the fifty years following its first production, it was staged in London every year at Christmas (with the exception of 1939) followed by a regional tour. It was also staged in America and two films were made, including a Disney film in 1953.

This popularity has continued since, with regular productions, musicals, pantomime versions and more films and several television programmes being produced up until the present day. This is shown by the choice of Christmas production at the Bristol Hippodrome this year.

### **Costume design for the Ostrich, John Elvery, 1984/5, gouache on paper**

The Ostrich first appeared in *The Peter Pan Picture Book*, first published in 1907. The picture book was firmly aimed at children, in response to the publication of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* which was more of an adult book. Following this publication, certain stage productions of *Peter Pan* have featured an ostrich, including the 1984/5 production by the Bristol Old Vic. This costume was designed by John Elvery for Julia Lloyd.

## ON SCREENS

Production photographs by Bertram Park  
*Peter Pan*, Gaiety Theatre, 1927  
Starring: Jean Forbes Robertson as Peter Pan

Production photographs by George Karger  
*Peter Pan*, Imperial Theater (and US tour), 1950  
Starring Jean Arthur as Peter Pan, and Boris Karloff as Hook; produced by John Burrell and Wendy Toye