



PETER PAN

May 11-14, 2023

MARCUS CENTER

DISCOVER MICHAEL PINK'S *PETER PAN*

We're so glad you are joining us for this production of Michael Pink's *Peter Pan*, created for Milwaukee Ballet. *Peter Pan* debuted in 2010 to sold-out audiences and was restaged in 2012 due to popular demand. In 2014, Milwaukee Public Television televised the production to a national audience. *Peter Pan* would have been part of Milwaukee Ballet's 50th Anniversary 2019–20 season, but it was delayed until now due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This classic tale of the boy who refuses to grow up was first considered by Michael Pink as the subject for a ballet in 2005 and he based his ballet on the novel *Peter Pan* by J. M. Barrie. The central story follows the three Darling children, Wendy, John, and Michael, as they leave their parents, their nanny (a dog called Nana), and their home to fly with Peter Pan, a boy who never grows up, to the island of Neverland. On their adventure, the children get to know Tinker Bell, a fairy who depends on genuine belief to light her up. They mix with the Lost Boys, Peter Pan's pseudo-family of young children, and meet Tiger Lily, who helps them battle Captain Hook, Peter's sworn enemy, and his pirate crew. They also encounter enchanted mermaids and a crocodile with a ticking clock that announces his arrival. What makes this ballet one of the most exciting presentations of the season is that it requires our dancers to fly! In fact, *Peter Pan* works so well as a ballet because ballet dancers already appear as if they can fly when they jump, leap and soar across the stage.

THE ORIGINAL *PETER PAN*



J. M. Barrie, a Scottish writer, introduced the character of *Peter Pan* in 1902 in a story called *The Little White Bird*, which was intended for adults. A play, *Peter Pan; or, the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, followed in 1904, premiering at Duke of York's Theatre in London. Due to the popularity of the play, Barrie continued to develop the story, turning the *Peter Pan* chapters into their own story in 1906 and expanding the play into the novel *Peter and Wendy* in 1911. Interestingly J.M Barrie intended for his story to benefit children far beyond the stage and story. In 1929, he donated all the rights in *Peter Pan* to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. In 1987, fifty years after Barrie's death, the copyright expired under UK law. However, the following year a unique act of Parliament restored royalty income from all versions of *Peter Pan* to the hospital, which means that sick children will continue to benefit from J. M. Barrie's generous gift for as long as the hospital exists.



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Along with representing the adventure that is a hallmark of Peter Pan, Michael Pink was interested in exploring why Peter acts the way that he does. In the novel, Pink found that family (and the lack thereof) is a major theme in Peter Pan. In fact, the desire for a mother, shared by Peter, Captain Hook, and the Lost Boys, permeates the story with a sense of longing and gives the ballet a depth beyond the adventure story in Neverland. The Lost Boys don't seem to be familiar with the concept of "mothers," but quickly come to enjoy Wendy's care for them. Peter gets very angry when the Darling children want to leave to go back home to their own mother and the Lost Boys choose life in the real world over Neverland.

So come along with us into a world where dogs take care of you, where pirates and princesses reign, to the home of Lost Boys and a group of lost Darlings, to see all children, except one, grow up. The size and swash-buckling fun of the show will make you a believer, so think happy thoughts and have fun! Welcome to Peter Pan!





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SYNOPSIS

From the Diary of Wendy Moira Angela Darling...

March 25, 1941

Dear Diary,

Do you remember how John, Michael, and I love to play make-believe in Neverland? I always play Peter Pan, and John is a rather dastardly Captain Hook while Michael is the brave Princess Tiger Lily. Well, today I saw the REAL Peter in Kensington Gardens! Later, Father came home with an invitation to a grand party, but Mother seemed more concerned about Peter Pan. Do you think she really knows who he is?

March 26, 1941

Last night, I dreamt that a magical fairy was flying around the nursery with Peter chasing her about! He sat on my bed until Mother and Nana chased him away. Oh, how I wish my dreams would never end!

March 27, 1941

Sometimes I think Father is as mean as Captain Hook. Today when it was time for our medicine, he tricked Michael into taking his but then poured his own into Nana's bowl! Then he got very angry at Nana and banished her from our nursery. He thinks she is just a dog, but we know better. Poor Nana!

I don't know whether this was a dream, but Peter came back into the nursery because I had to help him sew his shadow back on. After, I told him he may give me a kiss, but he gave me an acorn necklace instead. I don't think Peter knows what a kiss really is – he can be so childish!

The most amazing thing happened next. Peter showed us all how to fly, and he's taking us to Neverland! He gave us the most peculiar directions: we had to fly towards "the second star to the right and then straight on 'til morning!" If this really is a dream, I hope I never wake up.

A NOTE ON THE CONTENT



It is important to acknowledge the foremost critique of *Peter Pan*, which is the racist and ignorant ways that Indigenous people are portrayed. These portrayals were wrong then and remain wrong today, and Milwaukee Ballet does not endorse the harmful depictions and stereotypes of Indigenous communities that have historically been included in adaptations of *Peter Pan*. We have begun work to update this production from its original form in several ways and recognize that additional work remains. In our interpretation, the characters that are typically represented as Indigenous people are a group of strong women, led by Tiger Lily. They defend Neverland against the Pirates and Captain Hook, and Peter and Tiger Lily are true friends. While the original costumes which you will see on stage are beautifully crafted, we know that they are representative of some of the harmful stereotypes and cultural appropriation that our Indigenous communities face. Preliminary adjustments have been made where possible, and we will continue to educate ourselves, examine this production, and make further changes in the future to be sure the ballet is as inclusive and respectful as it can be.



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SYNOPSIS CONTINUED

March 28, 1941 (I think...)

In all the times we've played Neverland, we always imagined that there were Pirates led by Captain Hook and that Princess Tiger Lily was accompanied by her Neverland Princesses. It is just so in Neverland! Let's see if I can recount all that has happened. Time seems so different in Neverland than it does at home...

When we were still flying, I suddenly had a most curious feeling of falling out of the sky – and indeed I had! Tinker Bell, the fairy who visited our bedroom with Peter, had shot an arrow at me! The acorn necklace Peter gave me must have saved my life. Once we all landed safely, Peter introduced us to the Lost Boys. These poor creatures need a mother, and they seem to think I'm the one to do it, but I don't know if I'm ready for that yet.

Peter told me many stories once we arrived. Did you know that he was the one who cut off Captain Hook's hand and threw it to a crocodile? The crocodile not only swallowed the hand but a clock too, and that's the only way Hook knows he's coming! Peter also took me to an enchanting mermaid lagoon. He is so charming, and I feel butterflies in my stomach when I'm around him.

Then the adventures really began... There were Pirates chasing the Neverland Princesses, and Peter had to come to the rescue! There are certainly a lot of things that need fixing in this home under the ground. They all simply must take their medicine! I suppose I'll try and be a mother to them. I read the Lost Boys a bedtime story and I did enjoy it greatly. It reminded me of home...

Speaking of home, I've decided it's time for us to return there before John and Michael forget all about it. I hope Peter will take his medicine after we go. Tinker Bell is going to help us find our way out, although I don't know that we can trust her.

We were just about to leave when the most horrid thing happened: Captain Hook captured John, Michael, the Lost Boys, and me!

Perhaps March 29, 1941

Oh, Diary! That dastardly Captain Hook took us captive on the Jolly Roger, his enormous pirate ship. Of course, John couldn't have been more excited – it's hard to tell the difference between real and make-believe in Neverland, so he didn't think we were in danger. Once aboard, Captain Hook asked me to read him a bedtime story. Does no one in Neverland have a mother?

Suddenly, his mood changed, and he ordered John to walk the plank! We were so scared, but Peter arrived to save the day. He dressed up like me, fooling that cowardly Captain, and made him walk the plank instead!

It was definitely time for us to leave Neverland after that! How I wish Peter would have come with us, but he just doesn't want to grow up. When we got to the nursery, Mother and Nana were there, and you can't imagine where we found Father! The Lost Boys came home with us and were welcomed into our family. I've never been so happy to be home, but I hope I never ever forget Neverland, and I hope Peter will come back to see me someday.

Goodnight, Diary.

Love, Wendy Darling