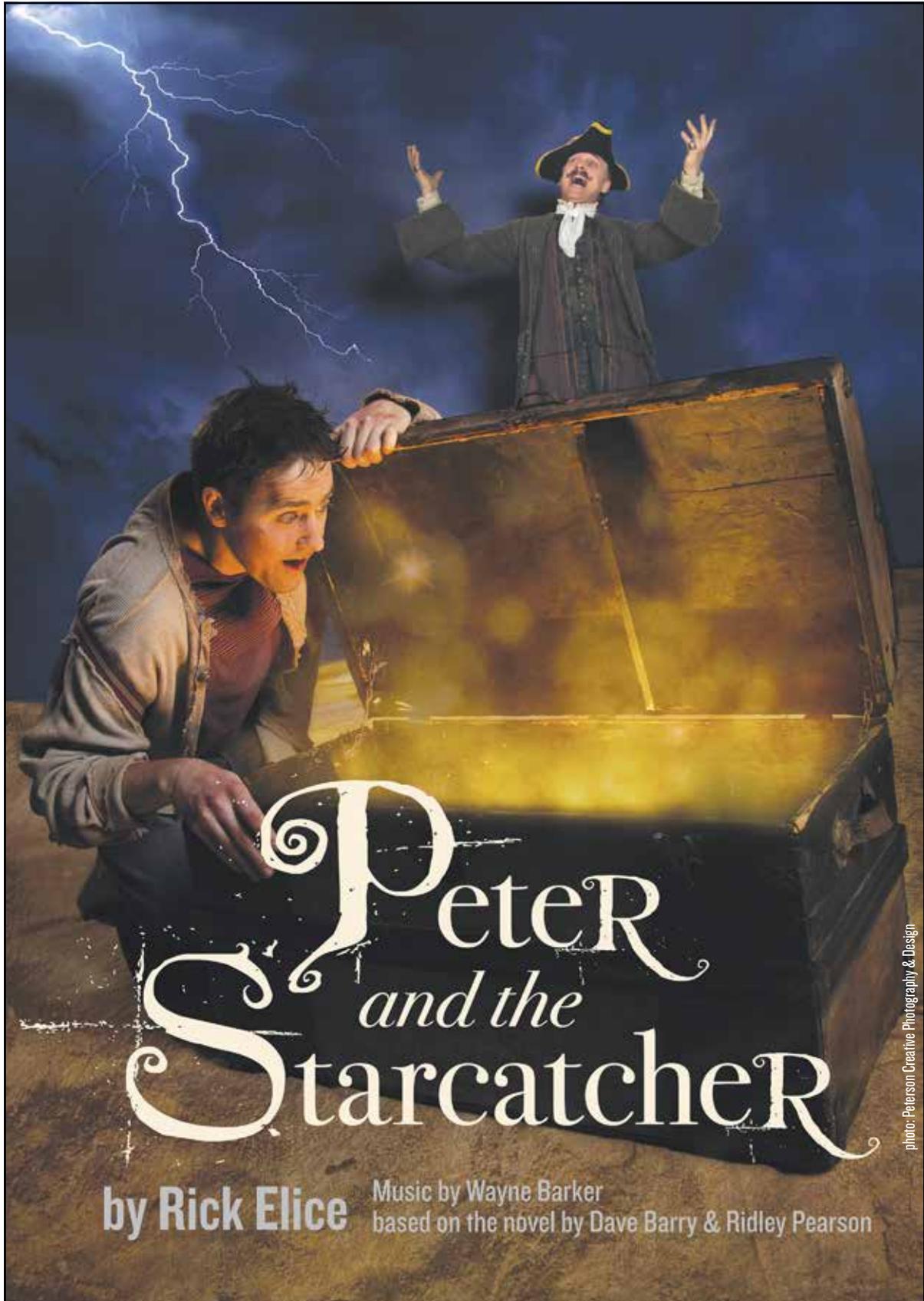


A Deeper Look



A Study Guide for the play.

COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY

presents

Peter and the Starcatcher

by Rick Elise music by Wayne Barker
based on the novel by Dave Barry & Ridley Pearson

Directed by Hal Cropp

Musical Director Stela Burdt
Stage Manager Lacey Szerlip
Asst. Stage Manager Jodi Rushing*
Set Design Justin Hooper
Costume Design Annie Cady
Lighting Design Dietrich Poppen
Sound Design .. Stela Burdt, Kelsey Heathcote
Props Design ... Brandt Robert, Jodi Rushing
Music performed by Anthony J. Sofie

* 2020 Apprentice Company member

CAST



Josiah Laubenstein
Boy / Peter



Matt Donahue*
Prentiss



Jeremy van Meter
Capt. Scott /
Mrs. Bumbrake



Alicia Ehleringer*
Smee / Greggors



Lizzy Andretta
Molly



David Hennessey
Leonard Aster



Philip Muehe
Ted / Teacher



Ben Gorman
Black Stache



Eric Lee
Alf



Caroline Hawthorne*
Fighting Prawn /
Gremplin/Mack/Sánchez



Rachel Kuhnle
Slank /
Hawking Clam

Playwright & Authors

RICK ELISE co-wrote *Jersey Boys* (2006 Tony Award and 2009 Olivier Award for Best Musical). As a creative director, he produced campaigns for some 300 Broadway shows. Later, he served as creative consultant for the Walt Disney Studios. DAVE BARRY is a professional humorist known for his syndicated column that appeared in more than 500 newspapers. One of his columns was largely responsible for the International Talk Like a Pirate Day (September 19). He won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1988. RIDLEY PEARSON is a prolific author of adult suspense novels and children's fiction. He was the first Ameri-

can to receive the Raymond Chandler-Fulbright Fellowship at Oxford University in 1991, and he received the Quill Award from the Missouri Writers Hall of Fame. Scottish-born J. M. BARRIE (Sir James Matthew Barrie, 1860-1937) was a novelist and playwright, best remembered today as the creator of Peter Pan. While in London, he met the Llewelyn Davies boys, who inspired him to write about a baby boy who has magical adventures in Kensington Gardens, then to write Peter Pan; or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up—first as a “fairy play” (1904), then as a novel (Peter and Wendy, 1911).

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The Sun Valley Center for the Arts
Ketchum, ID





Peter and the Starcatcher

by Rick Elice, music by Wayne Barker
based on the novel by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson

Presented by the
Commonweal Theatre Company
July 12 - October 26, 2019

The Characters

The Orphans

PETER—A boy who doesn't miss much. Nameless, homeless and friendless at the beginning of the play, and a hero by the end. Feral, brave, competitive, the boy the others will come to look up to. A survivor. More than anything in the world, he wants a home and a family.

PRENTISS—A bit older than Peter. Ambitious, hyper-articulate, logical, yearns to be a leader even as he knows he never shall be one, on account of the fact that the boys wouldn't follow him no matter what, with just the teeny-tiniest touch of cowardice.

TED—Obsessed with food: the finding of, the eating of, the fighting over, the dreaming about. The most talented of the boys, a natural actor and easy wit, maybe even a poet.

The British Subjects

LORD LEONARD ASTER—The very model of a Victorian English gentleman, loyal subject to the Queen, devoted father to Molly, faithful friend. Lord Aster is a *Starcatcher* dedicated to protecting the earth and all who dwell thereon from the awesome power of starstuff.

MOLLY ASTER—Raised to believe females can do anything males can. A natural leader at a time when girls are mostly followers. Fearless, passionate, devoted to her father, her country and her Queen. Willing to risk everything for the sake of doing right. Curious, intelligent, beginning to feel things she doesn't understand—romantic longings that revert to childish tantrums under pressure—because, for the moment, she's still a thirteen-year-old kid.

MRS. BETTY BUMBRAKE—Molly's Nanny. British through-and-through, not afraid of anything, including her late husband. A no-nonsense, good-time gal, who still has enough of her girlish charm intact to turn a sailor's head.

CAPTAIN ROBERT FALCON SCOTT—Captain of the sports teams at Trinity School, now commander of the fastest ship in Victoria's fleet, the *Wasp*.

GREMPKIN—The malodorous schoolmaster of St. Norbert's Orphanage for Lost Boys. A.k.a. The Angel of Anguish, he keeps his boys in the dark.

The Seafarers aboard the *Neverland*

BILL SLANK—A vicious Captain without the skill or quality to lead anyone but himself, and always into disaster. Would sell his own mother for a ship to command. Cheerfully aids the awful machinations of those who would use starstuff for personal gain, global domination, or worse. An orphan too.

ALF—An old seadog who's prouder of achieving the rank of "Mister" than he should be, given the state of the competition. A white knight in search of a damsel—any damsel. Something about him appeals to the feminine sensibility; might be his bow legs, his saucy gait or his kind heart.

MACK—A very bad sailor who wants to be anywhere else but under the thumb of Bill Slank.

Aboard the *Wasp*

BLACK STACHE—Long after most everyone else has gotten out of the Pirate business, The Black Stache continues to terrorize the seven seas. Ruthless, peerless, heartless and suspiciously well read, partial to the poetical and theatrical, and married to his piratical career with a ferocity from which no good shall ever spring.

SMEE—First mate to Black Stache. Simple-minded but single-mindedly dedicated to his Captain's every whim.

SÁNCHEZ—A hard-working Spanish pirate with an identity crisis.

The Natives (Mollusk Island)

FIGHTING PRAWN—King of the Mollusk natives, son of Jumbo Prawn and Littleneck Clam. Kidnapped by British sailors and brought in chains to England, he served as sous-chef below stairs in a country estate in Derbyshire, where he learned Italian wines and mastered Italian cuisine. Since returning to his island kingdom, he has vengefully murdered any English with the temerity to land on his domain.

HAWKING CLAM—Son of Fighting Prawn. Hawking understands his father's hatred for the British, but, as often happens with younger generations, he will gladly bend such strictures when, one day, he ascends to the Clam throne as head of the Royal Clam Clan.

TEACHER—Formerly a salmon, now an ancient, knowledgeable mermaid.



Bat Out of Neverland: Growing Young with Peter and the Starcatcher

By Ryan Paul

In the preface of *The Great Gatsby*, Matthew Brucoli writes, “A popular classroom fallacy holds that classics are universal and timeless. Literature has staying power, but it is subject to metamorphosis. Every reader’s response to a work of fiction is determined by his presuppositional bias, beliefs, experience, and knowledge.” That, of course, is academic jargon used to communicate the notion that as one matures, ages, or has more life experiences, one’s perspective changes. In other words, as we grow up, so do our ideas. In classrooms across the country, students are forced to read the works of Shakespeare, Fitzgerald, and Orwell without having experienced the worldliness to truly understand them.



Author J. M. Barrie, 1902.

One of my favorite quotes comes from British historian C. V. Wedgwood; “History is lived forward but it is written in retrospect. We know the end before we consider the beginning and we can never recapture what it was to know the beginning

only.” We all have the shared experience of reading or seeing something for the first time, thinking that we will never forget that moment of reading that last line or watching the final scene. When we, after later years, revisit the novels, films, and television of our youth, they often leave us wanting. After all, I remember being terrified of Fantasy Island and, now, not so much. It seems to be the great dichotomy of life that on one hand we cannot wait to grow up but when we do, we spend a good portion of our time trying to figure out how to be young again.

One thing is certain: answers often come

from growing up, from replacing the bliss of youthful ignorance with the often challenging nature of adult knowledge. Playwright Rick Elice thoughtfully comments: “When I was a boy, I wished I could fly, and the notion of being a boy forever was pure delight. No homework, no chores, no responsibility, no sorrow. Now that I’m in the middle of my life, I understand what I’d have missed had I never grown up, or fallen in love, or stood my ground, or lost a battle—or written a play.” This brings us to *Peter and the Starcatcher*, a play, with music, about a boy we all thought we knew in our youth, created by J. M. Barrie, canonized by Walt Disney, and brought to vivid life this summer.



Peter Pan's Flight ride at Disney Parks.

I think I am in good company in saying that one of my favorite rides at Disneyland is the Peter Pan ride. The concept is genius. You climb into a pirate ship and fly through the night sky passing various vignettes of Walt Disney’s take on Barrie’s classic story. This ride is the genesis of Peter and the Starcatcher. While waiting in line, writers Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson were asked by their young daughters “Where did Peter Pan come from?” The authors decided that they would create their own tale answering the most asked questions: How did Peter become Peter Pan? How did Peter learn to fly? How did Peter get to Neverland? How did Peter meet Captain Hook and Tinkerbell? Most importantly, how did Peter become a boy forever? Their book, *Peter and the Starcatchers*, became an instant bestseller and launched a series of additional works fleshing out more of the story. Inspired by the novel, playwright Rick Elice and directors Roger Rees and Alex Timbers teamed up to create a



play based on the adventures of Peter, before he became the Pan.

The play, *Peter and the Starcatchers*, was first workshopped in 2007 at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in a staged reading, with a few props that helped the actors establish the varied locations presented by the script. It then moved to the Lo Jolla Playhouse, and then was further developed in a subsequent off-Broadway production. Now titled *Peter and the Starcatcher*, the play opened on Broadway in April of 2012. The play was nominated for nine Tony awards and brought home five.

The play features 11 actors playing a variety of roles, including sailors, seamen, pirates, orphans, and mollusks. Above all, *Peter and the Starcatcher* is a story of adventure. The stage will be awash with pirates, sea captains, mermaids, savage natives, a very unusual island, and a strangely myste-

rious trunk. The plot of our story centers on this trunk and its magical treasure. A treasure that makes everybody believe they can become anything their true heart desires.

Throughout the years, the story of Peter Pan has been adapted from the page to the stage many times. From puppet shows to popular musicals, from Japanese anime to straight up dramatic performances, from feature films to cable television, and, my personal favorite, a 1975 Kennedy Center rock opera which became the basis for one of the great rock albums of the 1970s: Meatloaf's *Bat Out of Hell*. Barrie's tale of the boy who can't or won't grow up has captivated our attention.

Listening to *Bat Out of Hell* as you travel to the show may enhance your experience; however, you better keep your windows rolled up as Meatloaf, like Captain Hook, likes his words to be heard.

Story Synopsis



ACT ONE

Molly and her father, Lord Aster, are traveling to the distant kingdom of Rundoon on an important, top-secret mission for Queen Victoria of England. The royal mission: Lord Aster must destroy the mysterious contents of a trunk. Aster takes the Queen's trunk aboard the fastest ship in the sea, the *Wasp*, captained by Robert Falcon Scott. Joining him is a group of British Navy seamen, led by Lieutenant Greggors. Lord Aster sends Molly and her nanny, Mrs. Bumbrake, to Rundoon on a safer route aboard a merchant ship called the *Neverland*. Aster gives Molly a magic amulet that matches one he wears; they can use these special amulets to communicate

with each other.

Before the two ships depart, the wicked captain of the *Neverland*, Bill Slank, sneaks the Queen's trunk into his cabin aboard the *Neverland*, leaving an identical trunk—full sand—in its place. The trunk of sand ends up aboard the *Wasp*.

While on the *Neverland*, Mrs. Bumbrake and an old seaman named Alf become smitten with each other. Molly meets three orphan boys: the intelligent Prentiss, the food-obsessed Ted, and a quiet but perceptive Boy without a name. These three were put on the *Neverland* by their abusive schoolmaster, Gremppkin, to be sold as snake food for the pet snake of the evil King Zarboff of Rundoon.

Meanwhile, on the *Wasp*, Lieutenant Greggors corners Lord Aster. Greggors reveals that he is actually Smee the pirate! Captain Scott and his crew have been tied up by the "Navy seamen," who are also pirates! The pirates are led by the fearsome and poetical Black Stache (the future Captain Hook), the last pirate in the business. Black Stache steals Lord Aster's key to the Queen's trunk.

On the *Neverland*, Molly's amulet begins to glow, telling her that her father's in trouble. Then, Molly, the Boy, Prentiss and Ted



Story Synopsis (Cont'd.)

discover a glowing light and a ringing sound coming from Slank's cabin. They open the door and find a trunk and a flying cat! It's the Queen's trunk! Molly doesn't want to reveal the secret of the Queen's trunk to the three boys, so she distracts them with a bedtime story: *Sleeping Beauty*.

At the same time, Black Stache unlocks the trunk and finds nothing but sand. They all realize that the Queen's trunk must be on the *Neverland*. Black Stache turns the *Wasp* around to chase after the slower *Neverland*.

Lord Aster uses his amulet to update Molly, and tell her that as soon as the *Wasp* catches up to the *Neverland*, she must bring him the Queen's trunk. The Boy catches Molly talking to her amulet and confronts her. Molly explains that the amulet and the Queen's trunk contain starstuff, a magic substance that falls to earth from the stars. Molly warns him that starstuff is dangerous—it changes people, depending on what they want to be—and that's why her father needs to destroy it. Molly's father is a Starcatcher, a person with special powers who works to keep starstuff from falling into the wrong hands. Molly herself is a Starcatcher-in-training.

Slank catches Molly and the Boy outside their cabins and throws the Boy overboard. The Boy can't swim, so Molly dives in after him. She saves him, bringing him back aboard ship.

Finally, the *Wasp* approaches the *Neverland*, just as a huge sea storm begins. The Boy manages to turn the *Neverland* around; the *Wasp* catches up and Black Stache and his pirates board the *Neverland*. Black Stache and Slank begin an epic "sword" fight (a rhyming word battle) when suddenly the sea storm splits the *Neverland* in half.

Slank tries to steal the Queen's trunk from Molly and Mrs. Bumbrake, but Alf comes to their rescue and throws Slank overboard to his death. The Boy distracts the pirates in order to buy time for Molly to get the Queen's trunk to her father. The Boy meets Black Stache, and when Black Stache finds out the Boy doesn't have a name, he decides to give him one: Peter. But when Black Stache

realizes the Boy—now Peter—was stalling for Molly, he throws Peter overboard. Molly decides to throw the Queen's trunk overboard for Peter to grab onto.

As the ship falls apart in the storm, Mrs. Bumbrake, Alf, Prentiss, Ted and Molly all jump into the ocean. They all swim toward a nearby tropical island. As Peter also floats toward the island, the Queen's trunk leaks a strange golden light into the sea.



ACT TWO

On the island, Ted and Prentiss find Peter guarding the Queen's trunk on a mountain. The boys hide the trunk and head into the jungle in search of Molly. They are quickly surrounded by the Mollusks, a group of native islanders. They meet the Mollusk leader, Fighting Prawn, and his son, Hawking Clam. Fighting Prawn hates the British; he was taken from home as a boy by the British and forced to work as a kitchen slave until he was able to escape back to Mollusk Island. The Mollusks plan to feed the boys to Mister Grin, the vicious crocodile living on the island. Peter makes a deal with Fighting Prawn: if the boys can entertain him, they won't have to die. The boys decide to perform *Sleeping Beauty*, the story Molly told them earlier. But they don't remember the story very well, and an exasperated Molly jumps out of hiding to correct them. Fighting Prawn throws all four of them into Mister Grin's enclosure. Molly comes up with a plan: she throws her amulet (with its bit of starstuff) into Mister Grin's mouth. Mister Grin grows in size and flies into the air, breaking open the enclosure. Molly, Peter, Prentiss and Ted run away with Mister Grin and the Mollusks in pursuit.

Meanwhile, Black Stache and Smee also



end up on the beach of the island after the shipwreck. They want to find Peter so they can force him to bring them the Queen's trunk. Black Stache plots to dress Smee up as a siren to lure the boys with a siren song.

Molly, Peter, Prentiss and Ted have outrun the Mollusks for the moment. Molly's father—still on the *Wasp*—uses a light to flash a message to Molly using Norse Code (the ancient Viking signalling system). Lord Aster tells them to bring the trunk to the beach so he can meet them there.

Molly, Prentiss and Ted run off to get the trunk while Peter diverts the approaching Mollusks away from the others. As Peter runs he misses a step, falling off the mountain and down into a lake in a grotto. The lake is filled with a strange, thick, golden water. Peter meets Teacher, a fish who was turned into a mermaid by the starstuff leaking into the water from the Queen's trunk as Peter floated towards the island. Teacher tells him that the starstuff changes you into what you want to be. Peter says he only wants to be a boy for awhile, with a home and a family. Before Peter leaves to find Molly, Teacher decides to give him a family name: Pan.

Far above, Molly, Prentiss and Ted have made it to the mountaintop where the trunk is hidden. They begin to drag the trunk down the mountain when a tropical storm hits, forcing them to take cover. While Ted and Prentiss sleep, Peter catches up to them, happily reuniting with Molly. Peter wants to open the trunk and sit in the starstuff—like Teacher did—so that he can become what he wants to be, but Molly doesn't let him. Instead, they sit and talk until Molly falls asleep. Peter tries and fails to force the trunk open, then runs off.

Morning comes, and Molly, Prentiss and Ted bring the trunk to the beach. There they find a disguised Black Stache, who's abandoned the siren song idea and instead offers them a poisoned fruitcake. Molly removes Black Stache's disguise and ruins his plan, so he switches to Plan C: use his captives—Mrs. Bumbrake and Alf—as bargaining tools.

Then Fighting Prawn and the Mollusks appear with captives of their own: Lord Aster and Captain Scott. Betty Bumbrake recognizes Fighting Prawn as the kitchen slave boy she had known many years earlier in En-

gland. Black Stache grabs Fighting Prawn and threatens to kill him if Molly doesn't give him the trunk. Peter suddenly appears and begins to duel Black Stache. Ted and Prentiss jump into the fray to help. When Molly also tries to help, Black Stache tricks and traps her. Peter hands the trunk over to Black Stache in order to save Molly's life. Black Stache and Smee open the trunk and find it empty; all the starstuff had dissolved in the ocean water during the shipwreck. In his rage, Black Stache accidentally slams the trunk shut on his right hand, severing it from his wrist.

Nonetheless, Black Stache is thoroughly impressed by Peter's willingness to sacrifice something special for somebody else. He decides Peter is the hero he's been searching for, and declares that they should be lifelong enemies. Peter agrees, but only if Black Stache releases his friends; Black Stache agrees.

Suddenly, the huge flying crocodile, Mister Grin, approaches. Black Stache wants to bring Mister Grin on his crew, so he and Smee run after the giant crocodile, using Black Stache's severed hand as bait.

Molly reunites with her father, and Fighting Prawn, who is also impressed by Peter's bravery, decides to allow everyone to leave the island. Lord Aster pronounces Molly a full-fledged Starcatcher.

Molly wants the boys to come home with them, but she and her father learn that the grotto Peter swam in was filled with dissolved starstuff from the shipwreck. Molly and Aster realize that Peter will stay a boy for "awhile" (forever), and can't come with them. Peter learns that the last name Teacher gave him, Pan, is Greek for "all"—meaning that all of the island will be his home, and that Prentiss, Ted, the Mollusks and all the island creatures will be his family. Aster wants to give Peter some protection, so he uses the last of the starstuff in his amulet to transform an island bird into a fairy (Tinkerbelle). Molly gives Peter her address in London, then leaves with her father.

The starstuff will cause Peter to forget Molly but, in time, he will have an adventure with her daughter, Wendy. The story ends with Peter's new fairy friend telling him that he can fly. Peter jumps into the air and flies for the first time.



About the Authors

Peter and the Starcatcher is a play based on a novel inspired by a play!

RICK ELICE

Peter and the Starcatcher (play)

American playwright Rick Elice (born 1956) has written a number of successful Broadway hits, including *The Addams Family*, *Turn of the Century*, and the award-winning *Jersey Boys*. Elice adapted Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson's novel, *Peter and the Starcatchers*, into a theatrical play, which premiered in 2009. Elice decided to drop the "s" in the title of the play version in order to emphasize the relationship between Molly and Peter.

DAVE BARRY AND RIDLEY PEARSON

Peter and the Starcatchers (novel)

Dave Barry (born 1947) is a humor journalist and Ridley Pearson (born 1953) is a suspense novelist. These two lifelong friends teamed up to write *Peter and the*

Starcatchers, a prequel to J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan story. The story was inspired by Ridley Pearson's daughter, who asked her father one night how Peter Pan met Captain Hook.

J. M. BARRIE

Peter Pan (play)

Novelist and playwright J. M. Barrie was born in 1860 to a family of weavers in Scotland. His most famous work is the play *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, which was first published in 1904. He also published a novel adaptation of the play called *Peter and Wendy* in 1911. Barrie's inspiration behind the story of Peter Pan came from stories he told to the boys of the Llewelyn Davies family, a family he befriended in London. Before Barrie died, he gave the rights of Peter Pan to a children's hospital in London that still benefits from their proceeds today.

Glossary

Aft

In or near the hind part or stern of a ship.

Ahi

A large tuna, esp. the bigeye and the yellowfin tuna.

Capstan

An apparatus use for hoisting weights and heavy sails. It consists of a vertical spool-shaped cylinder around which rope is wound. It is rotated manually.

Dover sole

Refers to two types of fish: the *Solea solea* found in the eastern Atlantic Ocean, commonly used for fillet cooking, and the *Microstomus pacificus* found in the Pacific Ocean, primarily used for grilling.

Foretop

The top of a foremast (the forward lower-mast).

Frigate

A fast, medium-sized sailing vessel of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Grotto

A cave or cavern, esp. one that forms an agreeable retreat. In *Peter and the Starcatcher*, the grotto is underground and connected to the ocean.

Jib

The jib is the triangular sail at the front of the boat.

Knots

The nautical measure of speed. Knots are determined using a piece of knotted string fastened to the log-line, one of a series fixed at such intervals that the number of them that run out while the sand-glass is

running indicates the ship's speed in nautical miles per hour. 1 knot = 1.15078 mph.

Lagoon

A shallow body of water, esp. one separated from the sea by sandbars or a barrier reef.

Longboat

The largest boat belonging to a sailing vessel.

Mast

An upright pole, usually raked, which is fixed or stepped in the keel of a sailing ship in order to support the sails, either directly or by means of horizontal spars.

Merchant sailors

Sailors on a trade vessel.

Mizzenmast

On a ship with two or more masts: the mast aft of the mainmast.

Smelt

A species of small saltwater Northern Hemisphere fish that breed in freshwater. Smelt are a common food source for salmon and lake trout. The orange eggs of the smelt, also known as roe, are often used to garnish sushi.

Spar

The gaff and the boom are spars, i.e. long round bits of wood used to support sails.

Swag

Plunder or booty.