



PETER AND THE STARCATCHER

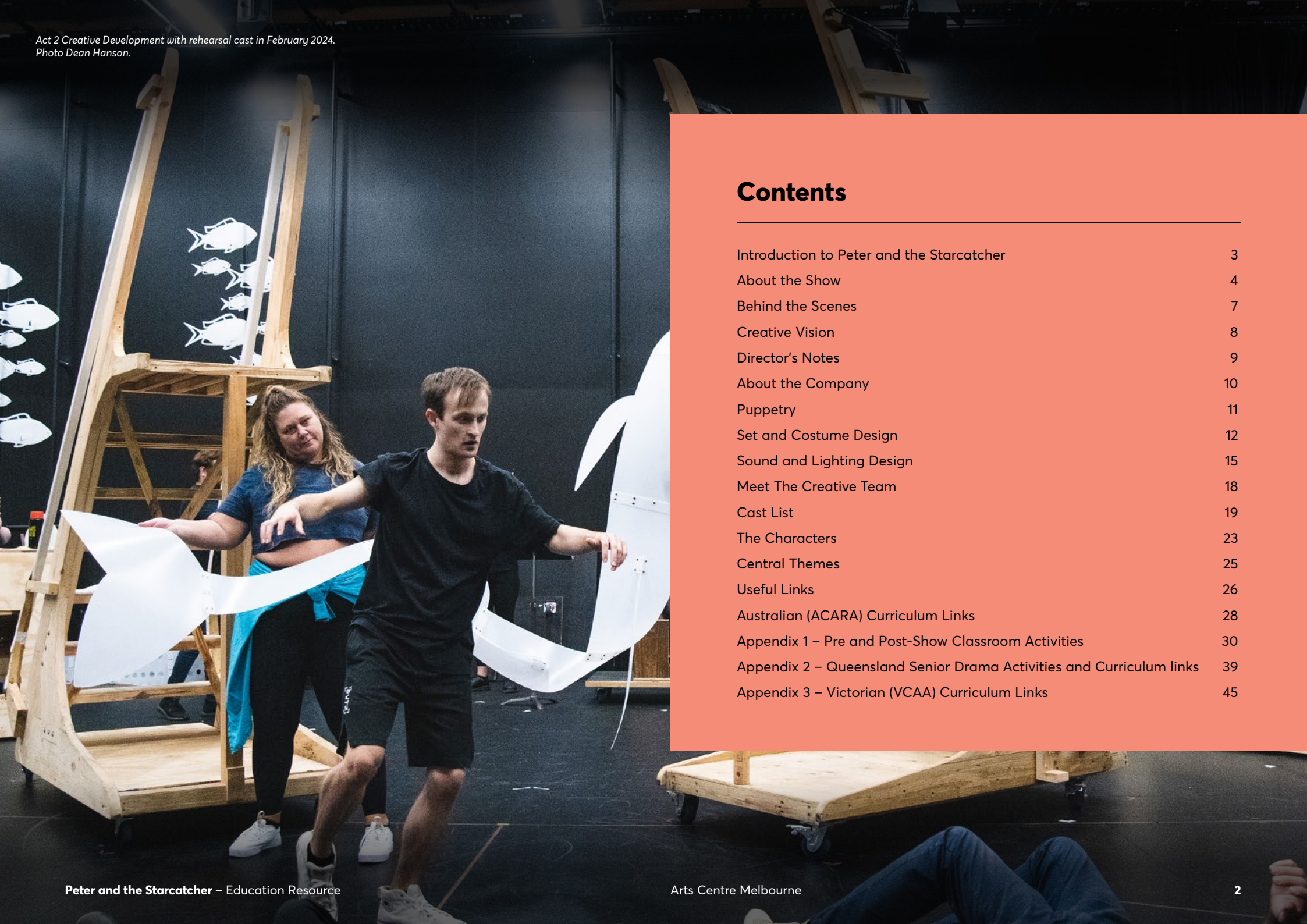
A PLAY BY RICK ELICE

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY DAVE BARRY AND RIDLEY PEARSON

MUSIC BY WAYNE BARKER

Education Resource

Written by Iris Radovic, Arts Centre Melbourne
and Dead Puppet Society



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Introduction to Peter and the Starcatcher

Peter and the Starcatcher offers an exciting prequel to the classic J.M Barry's Peter Pan story. Before Neverland there was an island. Before Captain Hook, a moustachioed pirate. Before Wendy, her mother Molly. Before Peter, a nameless orphan.

Bursting with humour and imagination with over 100 unforgettable characters, puppetry, live music and technical wizardry, the play delves into themes of friendship and courage and reflects the power of community in a strong and visual way. Traversing oceans of mermaids and curious creatures, this whimsical, lightning-paced work is a story of heroes, villains, friendship and fate, exploding with stage magic.

Originally developed by Disney Theatrical Group, written by Rick Elice (Jersey Boys, The Addams Family), with music by Wayne Barker, this all-new production is directed by Dead Puppet Society's David Morton (Holding Achilles, The Wider Earth).

Commissioned and originally produced by Disney Theatrical Group.

Originally produced on Broadway by Nancy Nagel Gibbs, Greg Schaffert, Eva Price, Tom Smedes, and Disney Theatrical Group. Licensed exclusively by Music Theatre International (Australasia).

From Director and Designer David Morton

The joy of Peter and the Starcatcher is in the way it stands as an origin story to the familiar world of Neverland, and iconic characters like Peter Pan, Captain Hook and Smee. The play does this with wit and charm, and a total dedication to the power of storytelling. Dead Puppet Society has approached the script with playfulness and a whole lot of theatrical magic. Performers are cast not just as characters, but as an ensemble that brings the whole world of the play to life. They move set pieces, light the action, and wield puppets right before audience eyes.

The collective sense of purpose and belonging reflects the magic of theatre. The feeling of being a part of something that is bigger than us. This is a show which backs low-fi staging with serious technical oomph to stretch the minds of young people into dark spaces and remind adults that we never really grew up.

PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTION AND SYNOPSIS

About the show



Act One

is the story of two ships, and the twists and turns that are taken to steal a trunk of the magical substance *starstuff*, which Lord Leonard Aster is taking to the distant Kingdom of Rundoon to destroy.

Aboard the first ship, the Neverland, underneath the brutal command of the crooked captain Slank, Aster's daughter Molly befriends three orphans, Ted, Prentiss, and the nameless Boy, while her nanny, Mrs Bumbake, falls head over heels for Alf, the ship's second in command.

On the other ship, the Wasp, Molly's father is taken captive by the notorious pirate captain Black Stache and his offsider Smee, who think they have captured the trunk full of starstuff.

But it's revealed that the starstuff is aboard the other ship along with Molly and the Lost Boys.

So Stache sets the ships on a collision course, and in a series of swashbuckling exchanges, the orphan boy gets his name, Peter, and the Neverland is wrecked near a mysterious island.

Molly, the Lost Boys, the pirate Stache and his offsider Smee, the nanny Bumbake and her beloved Alf, are thrown into the sea. They follow Peter as he rides the trunk of starstuff to a nearby island.

Act Two

begins with a chorus of fetching mermaids recalling how their encounter with starstuff led to their transformation from ordinary fish to curious creatures.

Peter wakes up on the top of a mountain, alone other than for a strange yellow bird. Ted and Prentiss find him, and the orphans decide to hide the trunk and set off to find Molly, hoping that her father Lord Aster will take them in.

Along the way they are captured, along with Molly, by the Mollusks, a group of shipwrecked Italian chefs under the leadership of Fighting Prawn, who is unforgiving of the damage caused by the British and decides to feed them to their pet crocodile.

Molly saves the day by feeding the croc her starstuff amulet, accidentally transforming the beast into a starstuff affected giant croc, and further enraging the Mollusks.

Meanwhile, having searched the beach for the lost trunk, Stache and Smee concoct a plan to lure Peter and the orphans to them.

In an attempt to escape the Mollusks' pursuit, Peter separates from Molly and the other orphans and leads the locals away, until a collision with a flock of yellow birds sends him tumbling into a grotto below the island. In the glowing water of the grotto Peter meets Teacher, a scotch-salmon turned mermaid, who reveals that starstuff has the power to make Peter whatever he wants to be, and gives him his second name, Pan.

Molly, Ted and Prentiss retrieve the trunk, and when Peter doesn't show up, assume that the Mollusks must have caught him. They carry the trunk through a storm in the jungle and head for the beach.

Peter finds Molly in the jungle. Their reunion reveals deeply held feelings for one another. When Molly falls asleep, Peter disappears into the night.

On the beach, Smee and Stache lure Molly and the orphans in, and when Molly exposes their ruse, the pirates reveal that they are holding Alf and Bumbrake as prisoners. Then the Mollusks show up with Lord Aster and Scott as their prisoners.

The stalemate is broken when Fighting Prawn and Bumbrake recognise each other, and Stache seizes the moment to take Fighting Prawn as his prisoner and attack each of the orphans in turn. Peter arrives and trades the trunk of starstuff in exchange for Molly's life.

Upon opening the trunk, Stache is horrified to discover that the contents have dissolved into the seawater, accidentally cuts off his own hand, and is chased away by the giant croc with Smee in pursuit.

Thoroughly entertained, Fighting Prawn agrees to let everyone go, and the orphans seem set to enjoy a new life with the Asters, until they discover that Peter was exposed to the starstuff in the grotto and can't leave.

Ted and Prentiss decide to stay with him, Molly and Peter say a long goodbye. Peter names the island Neverland after the wrecked ship, and finally home, he flies.

Dead Puppet Society's Creative Director David Morton and Executive Producer Nicholas Paine with Peter and the Starcatcher development theatre model box. Photo Scott Barton.

WHO WE ARE

Behind the scenes



Creative Vision

Dead Puppet Society uses terms 'design-led' and 'visual theatre' to describe their approach to theatre and performance. We asked David Morton, Dead Puppet Society's Creative Director, and Director and Designer for Peter and the Starcatcher more about this, and about the creative vision for the production.

Our vision for this version of Peter and the Starcatcher is focussed on the dance between imaginative play and spectacular production value. We've tried to build a world where handheld planks can become the corridors of a tall ship, but that same ship might also be represented by an incredibly detailed, fully functional model so laden with technical tricks that it almost defies the imagination.

That's just one example. Making this show has been about building a process that constantly searches out ways to top each moment; to hold the hands of the audience as we build an imaginative world together while keeping back theatrical tricks that ultimately bring that world to hypercolour life before their eyes at just the right moment.

We use the term design-led in our process as a reminder of the primarily visual nature of theatre as an art form. It's a bias of our whole company and the way we make work for audiences who are used to streaming screen content. We don't believe that theatre is ever going to be able to compete with the level of realism and emotional intimacy that you can find in film media, but the potential it holds is even more exciting. When you watch a piece of theatre, you don't watch a fixed piece of work like an episode of your favourite show;

it's new every night, always changing, and literally right before your eyes. So we focus on design in our storytelling to make sure that every object, body, puppet, and set piece has been interrogated to be worth someone taking a night out of the comfort of their living room to come and see, and load them with surprises and tricks. There's magic in seeing transformation in theatre; there's no digital effects and clever editing to hide behind. It's live, and that's what makes it special.



Director's Notes

From Director and Designer David Morton

The first time I saw Peter and the Starcatcher was in New York in 2011 with my partner Nick. It was before Dead Puppet Society had made any of our large-scale works, and seeing a piece of theatre that was such a love letter to the power of imagination and the strength of ensemble driven storytelling was profound. It was one of the first times that we had seen a work that had at its core all the things that we love about theatre. It was funny. It was clever. It exploded with playfulness and joy. And in the alchemical combination of its many elements, it somehow broke your heart in the best way.

Over the next decade Dead Puppet Society went from being a tiny independent theatre company to one of the largest production houses in Queensland. We toured works around Australia and played productions in London and across the United States. We've had work in major playhouses and galleries, and wandered our creatures through city streets and the outback. In many ways each of these creations were our own love letters to what we had seen on that stage in New York in 2011. And so, as often happens when the world moves in circles, in early 2019, having just closed a play on London's

West End, we found ourselves in a bar in Long Island City with one of the original producers of Peter and the Starcatcher.

Maybe, we thought, the time had come for us to return to this play that had given us so much inspiration, and pour those dreams of Peter and Molly, of moustachioed pirates and the becoming of Tinkerbell and Neverland back into their world; to see if the artists and producers who had birthed this amazing retelling of one of our best known stories might let us try our hand at a new version, Dead Puppet Society style.

We're here now because they did.

The DNA of Peter and the Starcatcher is imagination in its collective sense. It's about a group of people dedicating themselves heart and soul to the telling of a story with everything at their disposal, and working each night with a new audience to conjure vistas of stars and horizonless oceans. It's a space to play, to fall in love, to be uplifted and moved. Peter's story is one of becoming, not alone, but with Molly the Starcatcher and all of their companions. It's about finding yourself through others, and in knowing who you are, finding home.

About the Company

Dead Puppet Society is an international production house and design-led theatre company. They combine timeless craftsmanship with cutting-edge technology to create deeply imaginative experiences wrought with spectacle and wonder.

Recent box office hits include *Holding Achilles*, *The Wider Earth*, *Ishmael*, *Laser Beak Man* and *Storm Boy*. They also create captivating activations for events and public spaces, from open-air performances and large-scale installations, to one-of-a-kind, laser-cut artefacts and exquisite, custom-made sculptures.

Dead Puppet Society has a Gallery and Fabrication Workshop space in Woolloongabba, Brisbane.





Puppetry

Dead Puppet Society draws on multiple forms and styles to create its unique style of designed theatre. Director and Designer David Morton explains why the company has always used non-human performers alongside actors.

From Director and Designer David Morton

Dead Puppet Society has always used non-human performers alongside actors in our shows, be they literal puppets, performing objects, activated set pieces, or pre-recorded characters because of the variation and texture they give to our productions. There's something uniquely wonderful about watching a non-human character come to life before your eyes, because your rational mind knows that it can't be real, but your imagination tells you it is, and indulging in the tension between the two is an absolute delight. In *Peter and the Starcatcher*, a show about the imagination, the puppets we've used are an integral part, not only of building the world, but of generating that special kind of imaginative connection that this sort of theatre can build.

There's all sorts of different styles and techniques of puppetry used alongside the human performers in this show, from super simple shadow puppets, large scale objects focussed on spectacle, and finely crafted creatures designed to mimic their real life counterparts and trick you into believing they're living, breathing animals. These objects allow us to expand the scope of the story and the world it takes place within, the seas and skies and forests of our version of *Peter and the Starcatcher* are no longer empty. Just like everything else in this show, our puppets are loaded with effects and technologies that will keep the audience guessing as to what they might do next, and whether it will be down to their own imaginations, or some wizardry that one of our artists is about to pull.

FROM DIRECTOR AND DESIGNER DAVID MORTON

Set and Costume Design

Set

Dead Puppet Society focuses on creating a space that serves as a platform for theatre dynamics and action to take place. We spoke with Director and Designer David Morton and Costume Designer Anna Cordingley to find out more.

From Director and Designer David Morton

Our approach to designing the set has been focussed on building a space that can serve as a frame for the action, and the incredibly detailed costumes, props and puppets at play within it, without overpowering the action. In finding the right style, we extrapolated on the mythology of the Starcatchers who are alluded to in the script, pulling astronomical elements, shapes, and colours to inform

the choices we're making. So much of this show is about transformation, so we've designed a stage that plays the same game. It's open and expansive, a flexible place in which the ensemble can play, which also hides technical elements that contribute to the spectacle. It might be subtle and meld into the background for most of the show, but when the set wakes up, you'll know.





Costume sketch of Black Stache by Costume Designer Anna Cordingley.

Costumes

From Costume Designer Anna Cordingley

David Morton, set designer, and I are approaching this design by favouring all things magical, all things imaginative, all things transformative and all things surprising. There certainly are historical references that have influenced lines and cuts and tailoring, but we are using history liberally. Enjoying the flamboyance and eccentricity afforded a good pirate!

One source I have learnt on whilst developing ideas is the [V&A museum archive](#), however, for although we are applying a light touch to our historical accuracy, I am interested in what various periods of fashion design can contribute to character and mood, and the V&A collection can teach us so very much.

Musical Director James Dobinson during Peter and the Starcatcher Creative Development at QPAC, October 2023, with rehearsal cast. Image Dean Hanson.

FROM JAMES DOBINSON AND BEN HUGHES

Sound and Lighting Design

Music and Sound Design

With a stomping score by Wayne Barker performed live on stage led by Musical Director James Dobinson (Bananaland), *Peter and the Starcatcher* uses music and sound design to transport the audience. We spoke with James Dobinson who creates a colourful combination of sounds whilst preserving the seafaring flavour of the score. The sound is expanded to the world of traditional folk and military bands with the actors carrying percussive instruments with them. The idea that all the sounds could be found on a ship is maintained using instruments such as piano, violin, guitars and harmonium accompanying the percussion on stage.

Whilst there are a few instances that involve the use of synths, they are used for the purpose of expanding the sound to a bigger language to accentuate significant moments in the play.

From Music Director James Dobinson

To begin with, I thought about what would be the most colourful combination of sounds we could achieve with the personnel we had, while keeping the seafaring flavour of the score. The original is scored for piano and percussion (with two moments of Ukulele) – and I thought – what if we split off the percussion to actors onstage with pieces they can carry and then expand the sound to the world of trad folk and military bands. So, with the idea that all the sounds could be found on a ship, I landed on piano, violin, guitars, harmonium and percussion, with a few sneaky synth moments when we need to expand to a bigger language— for example, when we're departing England, or when onstage magic is happening.



Lighting Design

Ben Hughes, the Lighting Designer, believes that lighting design cannot be done in isolation. We caught up with Ben to delve deeper into his approach to lighting design.

From Lighting Designer Ben Hughes

I think the first part of an approach to design for any genre of performing arts is to understand the work from a dramaturgical perspective. It's basically asking yourself the question "How is the story being told?" and then working through to develop some answers to that question. This then opens up into the design of the production.

I like feeling like I have defined for myself what the show needs from the design elements to function. Set and costume design, music and sound design, and of course in the case of Dead Puppet Society puppet design, will all influence thoughts around lighting. Light needs to be responsive and complementary to everything else on stage, both animate and inanimate, so lighting design cannot be done in isolation – every other element of the production will and does have an influence.

For Peter and the Starcatcher there are elements and moments that need to feel magical, and light is one of elements that can help generate the magic. It needs to punctuate beginnings and endings throughout the play. It needs to draw your eye to what an audience needs to see, and hide the bits they don't. It needs to draw you into the story. Alongside all of this it needs to fulfil a basic function and allow the audience to see the action on stage. Finding the cohesive design in all of these competing requirements is one of the main parts of my approach to lighting a show.



THE TEAM THAT CREATE ON STAGE MAGIC

Meet the Creative Team



Written by:
Rick Elice

Broadway: The Cher Show, Peter and the Starcatcher, Jersey Boys (with Marshall Brickman, Bob Gaudio, Bob Crewe; directed by Des McAnuff: Tony Award, Best Musical); The Addams Family (with Marshall Brickman, Andrew Lippa; directed by Jerry Zaks).

Regional: Turn of the Century (with Marshall Brickman; directed by Tommy Tune); Double Double (directed by Roger Rees); Dog and Pony (with Michael Patrick Walker); Studio 54 (with Stephen Trask, Peter Yanowitz; directed by Christopher Ashley).

His book Finding Roger, An Improbably Theatrical Love Story is published by Kingswell.



Music by:
Wayne Barker

2011 Drama Desk Award for Peter and the Starcatcher.

Broadway: Dame Edna: Back With a Vengeance (composer, co-lyricist with Barry Humphries).

Regional: The Great Gatsby (Guthrie), Twelfth Night and The Three Musketeers (Seattle Rep).

Television: "A Little Curious"

Other: Mark Bennett's A Midsummer Night's Dream (orchestrations). Chicago City Limits, the Raymond Scott Orchestrette, orchestras worldwide.

Dramatists Guild: Artistic associate for new musicals at NYTW.

Upcoming: I Heart Bob



Director and Designer:
David Morton

David is a writer, director and designer, and the Creative Director of Dead Puppet Society. Over the last fourteen years he has led Dead Puppet Society in the creation of large-scale designed theatre works developed with international teams.

Some highlights from work produced includes Holding Achilles, which was supported through the Major Festivals Initiative and has had successful seasons with Brisbane and Sydney Festivals. The Wider Earth (Dead Puppet Society, Queensland Theatre, Trish Wadley Productions, Glass Half Full Productions) was conceived in residence at St Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn, New York City and enjoyed a six-month run in a custom-built theatre in London's Natural History Museum. Laser Beak Man (Dead Puppet Society, La Boite, Brisbane Festival, PowerArts) was a collaboration with Tim Sharp developed at the New Victory Theater in New York City.

Additional works include Ishmael, The Riddle of Washpool Gully (Terrapin, Dead Puppet Society); Argus (Dead Puppet Society, Lincoln Centre, Queensland Theatre, Brisbane Powerhouse), Trollop (Queensland Theatre) and The Harbinger (Dead Puppet Society, La Boite, Critical Stages).

David has been nominated for five Helpmann Awards and an Olivier Award. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in puppetry and visual theatre from Queensland University of Technology.



Movement Director: Liesel Zink

Liesel Zink is an award-winning choreographer of Ukrainian and German descent. As an independent artist she has developed and presented work around Australia, Asia and Eastern Europe often working in collaboration with local dancers.

She is most well known for the creation of large-scale public space performances. This includes *Us And All Of This*, which engaged over 250 dancers in its premiere season in 2023 at Arts Centre Melbourne, Geelong Arts Centre and Bunjil Place (supported by the Betty Amsden Participation Program).

Her other significant work *The Stance* won the 2017 Australian Dance Award for Outstanding achievement in Independent Dance and was presented in 10 cities worldwide between 2015 and 2019. As a choreographer, Liesel has also been invited to work with Australasian Dance Collective (Mature and Youth Ensemble), Expressions Dance Company, Tasdance, DRILL, Stompin Youth,



Musical Director and Additional Music by: James Dobinson

James is an Australian-American music director, conductor, orchestrator, and record producer. With a particular eye for the development of new musicals, his work has been seen on Broadway, off-Broadway and US national tours, at regional companies across the United States, in London, and across Australia.

As music supervisor/conductor: original New York and London companies of *The View UpStairs*, Kate Miller-Heidke's *Bananaland*, Tim Finn's *Twelfth Night*, the original New York companies of *Clinton*, seasons for *Joe's Pub* at the Public Theatre New York, Cape Fear Repertory Theatre North Carolina, the Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma, *The Crown Uptown* in Wichita, Kansas, *La Boite* Brisbane, Queensland Theatre, as well as developmental work at Goodspeed Musicals Connecticut, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Opera Queensland, QT and QPAC, among many others.

As arranger/orchestrator: *The View UpStairs* (also album co-producer), *Clinton*, *Guys and Dolls* 2015 US National Tour, *Bananaland*, *Twelfth Night*, *Joh For PM!*, *Lord Mayor's Christmas Carols*. Concert orchestrations for Caroline O'Connor, Alexis Fishman, Tyce Green, Naomi Price, Max Vernon, concert pianist Alex Raineri, and many others.

Album arrangements: *Like They Do In The Movies* and the upcoming Motown album, both for Michael Longoria on Broadway records.

Keyboards: *Back To The Future*, *Hamilton*, *The Band's Visit*, jazz singer (and father of Amy) Mitch Winehouse, many others.



**Lighting Designer:
Ben Hughes**

Ben's lighting designs span theatre, dance, opera, concerts, and events. He designs for many companies including Queensland Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, State Theatre Company of South Australia, Queensland Ballet, Opera Queensland, La Boite, Malthouse, Belvoir, Brisbane, Sydney and Adelaide Festivals, Australasian Dance Collective, The Danger Ensemble and The Good Room.

Lighting design credits include: for Dead Puppet Society, Holding Achilles (with Legs on the Wall, Brisbane Festival and Sydney Festival, QPAC and Glass Half Full Productions); for Brisbane Festival, Bananaland, Salamander; for Sydney Theatre Company, Poison of Polygamy (with La Boite); for La Boite, The Last Five Years, Away, Naked & Screaming, The Time is Now; for Oombarra Productions, Breaking the Castle (with QPAC); for Queensland Theatre, The Almighty Sometimes, Othello, The Sunshine Club, Boy Swallows Universe, Return to the Dirt. Ben lectures in lighting design at Queensland University of Technology.



**Costume Designer:
Anna Cordingley**

Anna Cordingley is an award-winning set, costume, and exhibition designer whose work has been seen by audiences throughout Australia, Europe, Britain, and the United States.

Stage credits include: for Dead Puppet Society, Holding Achilles (with Legs on the Wall, Brisbane Festival and Sydney Festival, QPAC and Glass Half Full Productions), Storm Boy (with Melbourne Theatre Company and Queensland Theatre); for Opera Australia, Carmen, Aida; for Victorian Opera, Idomeneo (with Opera Australia), Cassandra Echo & Narcissis, Salome, The Threepenny Opera (with Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse); for Opera Queensland, Don Giovanni; for Melbourne Theatre Company, Sunday set, Jasper Jones, Abigail's Party set; for Sydney Opera House and Red Line Productions, Amadeus costumes; for Bell Shakespeare, Anthony and Cleopatra, Richard III; for Malthouse, Hour of the Wolf, Anna K, Meow Meow's Little Mermaid (with Belvoir).

Anna won a Helpmann Award for Best Set Design, two Green Room Awards and a Sydney Theatre Award for Best Costume Design.



**Sound Designer:
Matthew Erskine**

Matthew is a skilled sound engineer and designer with a broad range of experience in Queensland's theatre scene, musical theatre and the live music industries. He has a passion for finding creative design and engineering solutions to unique challenges.

Matthew is the Managing Director of CrossPoint Sound, a sound design and engineering company based in Brisbane. Currently the Head of Sound for Mamma Mia the Musical, and previously Head of Sound for the award-winning musical Hamilton, Matthew's design credits include; for Queensland Theatre Company; as associate, Boy Swallows Universe, as designer A Country Song (as designer), and The Holidays; for Old Fashioned Production Company, Becoming Bill (a musical by Bradly McCaw). He has been Head of Sound/ Sound Engineer for many Queensland Theatre productions including Emerald City, Death of a Salesman, Noises Off, and the national tour of Black Diggers. Other credits include Songs for Nobodies (national tour) and Country Song (tour).

Matthew also enjoys mixing live music and comes from a background of mixing everything from heavy metal to jazz and world music. He is also credited for a live recording released by Vieux Farka Toure on his album LIVE in 2010.



**Casting Director:
Michael Topple**

Michael launched Thank You Casting & Creative in 2022 after a career spanning Artist Management and Casting across all facets of the international entertainment industry.

Offering creative consulting services, his current credits include Casting Director of 2:22 A Ghost Story for its Australian debut at Her Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne; Rocky Horror Show's Narrator search for their return 2024 season, The Marvellous Elephant Man The Musical in Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney; and Australian casting for Creative Studios by Norwegian Cruise Line Holding's productions of Jersey Boys, Priscilla Queen Of The Desert The Musical, Kinky Boots, Footloose The Musical, and Velvet The Show.

In addition to casting, Michael works with corporate clients to secure comedians and MCs for events such as AMP Live, NAB Honour, and Optus Pacesetters.

He's thrilled to see this new production of Peter and the Starcatcher come to life for Australian audiences.



**Creative Producer:
Nicholas Paine**

Nicholas is a producer of theatre and festivals. He is a founding member and the Executive Producer of Dead Puppet Society, creating original design-led visual theatre between Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Recent Dead Puppet Society box office hits include Holding Achilles, Ishmael, The Wider Earth and Laser Beak Man.

Nicholas has worked as the Creative Producer of South Bank Corporation (2017 - 2018), Producer for Theatre Republic, Brisbane Festival (2016), Program Manager at La Boite Theatre (2012 - 2013), Programming Associate at Performance Space 122 in New York City (2011 - 2012), Producer for Backbone Youth Arts (2009 - 2011), Project Assistant on Brisbane Festival's Under the Radar (2009), Project Coordinator at Imaginary Theatre (2008) and Market Researcher for the Brisbane Writers Festival (2007)



**Associate Director:
Matt Seery**

Matt Seery is a writer/director/producer and the Associate Creative Director of Dead Puppet Society.

Credits as Co-Director include Ishmael 2023 Queensland Tour (Dead Puppet Society and QPAC), as Associate Director Holding Achilles (Dead Puppet Society and Legs On The Wall; Brisbane Festival and Sydney Festival), The Wider Earth 2022 National Tour (Dead Puppet Society), Ishmael (QPAC and Brisbane Festival 2021), and as Director Echoes in the Dust (Queensland Music Festival).

Puppeteer credits include Laser Beak Man 2019 National Tour (Dead Puppet Society) and Argus (Queensland Theatre, Artour), and Fabricator credits include Storm Boy (Queensland Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company) and The Harbinger (Dead Puppet Society, La Boite Theatre Company).

Matt holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Drama) with Distinction from Queensland University of Technology.

The Characters

The Orphans

Boy (Peter): A boy who doesn't miss much. Nameless, homeless, and friendless at the beginning of the play and a hero by the end. A survivor. More than anything in the world, he wants a home and a family. If he could grow up, he'd fall for Molly in a big way. But it'll never happen.

Prentiss: Ambitious, hyper-articulate, logical; yearns to be a leader, even as he knows in his heart that he never shall be one. A bit of a blowhard with just the teeny-tiniest touch of cowardice.

Ted: Obsessed with food: the eating of, the fighting over, the dreaming about.

A natural actor, an easy wit, perhaps a future poet. Called "Tubby" by Prentiss, though not due to girth, of which orphans, given their meager diets, have very little indeed.

The British Subjects

Lord Leonard Aster: The very model of a Victorian English gentleman, loyal subject to the Queen, devoted father, faithful friend. Also, and not irrelevant to our story, Lord Aster is a Starcatcher—dedicated to protecting the Earth and all who dwell thereon from the awesome power of starstuff.

Molly Aster: A true leader at a time when girls are mostly followers. Will risk everything for the sake of Doing Right. Curious, intelligent, beginning to feel things she doesn't yet understand – romantic longings that revert to childish tantrums under pressure – because, after all, she's a thirteen-year-old kid. She'll be a great woman one day.

Mrs. Bumbrake: Molly's nanny. British to the bone. Still has enough of her girlish charm to turn a sailor's head and leaven his dreams. Stiff in the lip, loose in the hip, fun on a ship.

Captain Robert Falcon Scott: Captain of the Britain's fastest frigate, the Wasp. Years later, he would lead an expeditionary team to the South Pole, freeze to death, and become the iconic British hero, Scott of the Antarctic.

Gremplin: The mean and malodorous schoolmaster of St. Norbert's Orphanage for Lost Boys. Likes to keep his boys in the dark, as sunlight is known to feed rebellious notions, and on account of the preference in certain quarters for lads that are white and pasty.

The Seafarers

Bill Slank: The Neverland's vicious captain, without the skill or quality to lead anyone but himself – and always into disaster. A greedy bastard who'd sell

his own mother for a ship to command and send boys to their doom for the favour of those who would use starstuff for personal gain, global domination, or worse. An orphan, too.

Alf: An old sea dog. 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 but under the thumb of Bill Slank.

Black Stache: Long after everyone else got out of the pirate business, Black Stache continues to terrorize the seven seas in search of a hero worthy of his villainy. Famous for his face foliage, he started shaving at age ten, had a bushy handlebar by eleven, and the blood of twenty crews on his hair by twelve. Heartless and hirsute, suspiciously well read, partial to the poetical and theatrical, and given to a ferocity from which no good shall ever spring.

Sme: First mate to Black Stache. Single-mindedly dedicated to his captain's every whim. His motto: "Tis good to be busy."

Sánchez: A hard-working Spanish pirate with an identity crisis. THE NATIVES

Fighting Prawn: King of the Mollusks, son of Jumbo Prawn and Littleneck Clam. Kidnapped by British sailors and

brought in chains to England, he served as sous- chef in a country estate in Derbyshire, where, for no good reason, he learned Italian wines and mastered Italian cuisine. Since returning to his island kingdom, he vengefully murders any English with the temerity to land on his Mollusk Isle domain.

Hawking Clam: Son of Fighting Prawn and Sweet'n'sour Shrimp. One day, he will ascend the Clam throne as head of the Royal Clam Clan.

Teacher: Formerly a salmon; now an ancient, knowledgeable mermaid.

Character note from the script:

Actors doubling in roles is terrific fun when it serves a dramatic purpose, and this play was conceived with specific doubling in mind. For example, the actor playing Gremplin and Fighting Prawn (two sources of anguish) doubles the roles of Mack and Sánchez (two victims of abuse). The actor playing Slank (who abuses Mack) in Act One doubles as Hawking Clam (neglected by Fighting Prawn) in Act Two, and Alf doubles as Teacher. Finally, since the point of the play is a celebration of "all"-ness (see the final scene), all the actors should serve variously as sailors, seamen, seafarers, orphans, pirates, mermaids, Mollusks...and narrators. In those cases where the actors are narrators, character names accompany the attribution for clarity.

Musical Director James Dobinson with musicians and rehearsal cast,
Creative Development February 2024. Photo, Dean Hanson.

COURAGE AND LEADERSHIP

Central Themes

Central Themes

Peter and the Starcatcher explores themes such as courage, leadership, and the importance of wishes and dreams. The play also investigates social hierarchies and power dynamics with gender roles woven into these themes in an intricate and meaningful manner.

1

Friendship and Loyalty

The characters, particularly Peter and his friends, form connections and support one another through various challenges and adventures. Their commitment to each other drives many of their actions and decisions throughout the play.

2

Identity and Self-Discovery

The characters undergo journeys of self-discovery and exploration of identity. The play explores themes of finding one's sense of purpose and embracing one's inner true being.

3

Imagination and Wonder

The play celebrates the power of imagination and the magic of storytelling. It encourages audiences to see the world through a curious lens and a creative intention.

4

Growing Up and Loss of Innocence

The characters experience moments of joy, excitement, and wonder, but they also encounter challenges, dangers, and difficult decisions confronting the realities of adulthood.

5

Resistance Against Oppression

Characters stand up against adversity fighting for freedom, justice, and equality. Their actions inspire courage and resilience.

6

The Power of Storytelling The characters undergo journeys of self-discovery and exploration of identity. The play explores themes of finding one's sense of purpose and embracing one's inner true being.



INFORMATION

Useful Links

Useful Links

FIND OUT MORE

[Dead Puppet Society Website](#)

[Peter and the Starcatcher production handbook](#)

[Peter and the Starcatcher Homepage](#)

[Peter and the Starcatcher Creative Team](#)

[Peter and the Starcatcher blurb](#)

[Peter and the Starcatcher – behind the scenes content. View here](#)

[Highlights from Peter and the Starcatcher on Broadway](#)

[Extended Broadway Preview](#)

[Dictionary of Nautical terms](#)

[Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain](#)

[The Victorian Child](#)

[Victorian Children in Victorian Times](#)

[Peter Pan by J.M. Barrie](#)

[WNYC Interview with Peter and the Starcatcher creators Rick Elice and Roger Rees](#)

[Theater Talk: “Peter and the Starcatcher”’s Rick Elice & Roger Rees](#)



Australian (ACARA) Curriculum Links

Drama

Years 7 and 8 Content Descriptions

Combine the elements of drama in devised and scripted drama to explore and develop issues, ideas and themes

[\(ACADRM040 – Scootle \)](#)

Develop roles and characters consistent with situation, dramatic forms and performance styles to convey status, relationships and intentions

[\(ACADRM041 – Scootle \)](#)

Analyse how the elements of drama have been combined in devised and scripted drama to convey different forms, performance styles and dramatic meaning

[\(ACADRR045 – Scootle \)](#)

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of drama from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their drama making, starting with drama in Australia and including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

[\(ACADRR046 – Scootle \)](#)

Years 9 and 10 Content Descriptions

Evaluate how the elements of drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama convey meaning and aesthetic effect

[\(ACADRR052 – Scootle \)](#)

Analyse a range of drama from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their drama making, starting with drama from Australia and including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider drama in international contexts

[\(ACADRR053 – Scootle \)](#)

Visual Arts

Years 7 and 8 Content Descriptions

Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes

[\(ACAVAM119 – Scootle \)](#)

Develop planning skills for art-making by exploring techniques and processes used by different artists

[\(ACAVAM120 – Scootle \)](#)

Analyse how artists use visual conventions in artworks

[\(ACAVAR123 – Scootle \)](#)

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their art-making, starting with Australian artworks including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

[\(ACAVAR124 – Scootle \)](#)

Years 9 and 10 Content Descriptions

Analyse a range of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and

enrich their visual art-making, starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider international artworks

[\(ACAVAR131 – Scootle \)](#)

Media Arts

Years 7 and 8 Content Descriptions

Analyse how technical and symbolic elements are used in media artworks to create representations influenced by story, genre, values and points of view of particular audiences

[\(ACAMAR071 – Scootle \)](#)

Identify specific features and purposes of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks including of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media artworks

[\(ACAMAR072 – Scootle \)](#)

Years 9 and 10 Content Descriptions

Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences

[\(ACAMAR078 – Scootle \)](#)

Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Peoples, and international media artworks

[\(ACAMAR079 – Scootle \)](#)

Dance

Years 7 and 8 Content

Descriptions Analyse how choreographers use elements of dance and production elements to communicate intent

[\(ACADAR018 – Scootle \)](#)

Years 9 and 10 Content Descriptions

Evaluate their own choreography and performance, and that of others to inform and refine future work

[\(ACADAR025 – Scootle \)](#)

Music

Years 7 and 8 Content Descriptions

Experiment with texture and timbre in sound sources using aural skills

[\(ACAMUM092 – Scootle \)](#)

Analyse composers' use of the elements of music and stylistic features when listening to and interpreting music

[\(ACAMUR097 – Scootle \)](#)

Years 9 and 10 Content Descriptions

Evaluate a range of music and compositions to inform and refine their own compositions and performances

[\(ACAMUR104 – Scootle \)](#)

Before The Show

Activity 1: Exploration and Creative Response

(English, Drama, Visual Arts, Visual Communication)

Objectives:

- To explore central themes and characters of the play
- To respond creatively to analysis and research
- To present findings and receive / give feedback

1. Introduction to the Play (15 minutes)

Begin by introducing students to the premise of Peter and the Starcatcher and its connection to the story of Peter Pan. Provide a brief overview of the main characters, setting, and central themes.

2. Character Analysis (20 minutes)

Divide students into small groups (2 – 3) and assign each group a specific character from the play. Provide students with character descriptions or script excerpts. Encourage students to discuss the character's motivations, personality traits, relationships, and their role in the rising action of the story.

Visual Art/ Communication /Design

Encourage students to conduct research into the Victorian Era aesthetic and fashion trends. Ask students to design 1 or more costumes for their character based on their analysis and research.

3. Theme Exploration (20 minutes)

Facilitate a class discussion on the central themes of Peter and the Starcatcher. Prompt students to reflect on themes such as friendship, identity, imagination, and resisting oppression. Encourage them to share their interpretations drawing on examples from the play or their own experiences.

4. Creative Response (30 minutes)

Instruct students to choose one of the central themes discussed and produce a creative response to it. This could take the form of a short script, a poem, a slam poem, or a song inspired. Allow students time to work collaboratively in their groups to brainstorm ideas and develop their creative responses.

Visual Art/Communication/ Design

- Ask students to create a colour palette for the world of Peter and the Starcatcher
- Collect images from magazines, the internet etc that reflect the colour chosen palette
- Using the collected images, create a mood board of images, words and drawings that reflect the world of Peter and the Starcatcher

- Use the mood board as a starting point for designing a specific set piece that could be used in the play
- Ask students to create a prototype or a model of the set piece

5. Share and Reflect

Give each group the opportunity to share / perform / display their creative responses with the class. After each showing, facilitate a brief discussion where students reflect on how their creative response relates to the themes of Peter and the Starcatcher and what insights they gained from the activity. Encourage feedback where students discuss what worked well and brainstorm suggestions for improvement.

6. Pre-Show Predictions (15 minutes)

Before attending the performance of Peter and the Starcatcher, have students make predictions about what they expect to see based on their discussions and analysis. Encourage them to consider how the characters, themes, and plot elements might come to life on stage.

Before The Show

Activity 2: Exploring Gender Roles in Peter and the Starcatcher and Victorian England (English, Drama, Visual Art, Visual Communication)

Objectives:

- To compare the portrayal of gender roles in Peter and the Starcatcher with the traditional roles of women in Victorian England, and to reflect on the ways gender dynamics have evolved over time to present day.
- To visually respond to analysis and exploration of gender roles throughout history.

Instructions:

1. Introduction to the Play and Historical Context (20 minutes)

Provide students with an overview of Peter and the Starcatcher and its setting. Introduce the historical context of Victorian England, focusing on gender roles and societal expectations of women in that period.

2. Reading and Analysis (30 minutes – 1 hour)

Have students read excerpts from the script that portray interactions between characters of different genders, (eg. Molly

Aster, Mrs. Bumbrake, and Black Stache. Encourage them to analyse how gender roles are represented and how they compare to the traditional roles of women in Victorian England. Students should consider aspects such as agency, power dynamics, and societal constraints.

3. Research and Creative Response (30 minutes – 1 hour)

Divide class into small groups and assign each group a specific aspect of gender roles in Peter and the Starcatcher (masculinity and femininity, neutrality, stereotypes, women's role in society, or gender nonconformity).

Groups are to research and then produce a creative response in the form of a short theatre performance or a slam poem reflecting what they have learnt.

Visual Art / Communication/ Design

Students use their research and analysis to design a costume for a character in Peter and the Starcatcher.

Then, students design a costume for the same character living in 2024.



During the Performance

Activity 1: Character Transformation

(English, Drama, Visual Art, Visual Communication)

Objectives:

- To deepen students' engagement with the characters of Peter and the Starcatcher by encouraging them to observe and analyse character development throughout the performance.
- To encourage students to notice costume design choices and consider the reasons behind these choices.

Instructions:

1. Prep (before the show)

Briefly introduce the concept of character transformation to the students. Explain that they will be focusing on how characters change/grow throughout the play.

For visual art / communication students, introduce the process of costume design in theatre.

2. Character Selection (before the show)

Assign each student or small group of students a specific character from Peter and the Starcatcher to focus on during the performance.

For visual art / communication students, ask them to consider their expectations for what sort of costumes / costume changes they may see in the show.

3. Observation (during the show)

As the students watch the play, instruct them to pay close attention to their character. Encourage them to observe the character's actions, dialogue, relationships with other characters, and any changes or developments they notice throughout the performance.

For visual art / communication students, ask them to consider how the character's costume

supports the portrayal of that character on stage. Does it say something about the character that is not in the script?

If there are any costume changes, what is the intended purpose and how does it convey information or encourage engagement with the audience?

4. Note-taking (During Intermission or Breaks):

Encourage students to take notes about their observations in the breaks rather than during the performance.



Costume sketch by Costume Designer Anna Cordingley.

During the Performance

Activity 2: Set Design and Construction Observation (Drama, Visual Art, Visual Communication)

Objectives:

- To deepen students' engagement with and observation of Peter and the Starcatcher design choices.
- To encourage students to consider how set design is used to create an alternate world.
- To encourage students to take notes and ideas based on what they observe.

Instructions:

1. Prep (before the show)

Introduce the concept of suspension of disbelief and how it is used to engage the audience and transport them to alternate worlds.

Discuss examples where theatre uses technical or theatrical techniques to achieve this transformation.

2. Observation (during the show)

Ask students to take note of any moments in the show where the set is used to create a sense of wonder, magic or to transport the audience to another world.

Consider how set, lighting and sound are used to emphasise a moment. Pay close attention to changes and how they create an element of surprise.

3. Note-taking (During Intermission or Breaks):

Encourage students to take notes about their observations and any ideas they have.

Post-Performance Discussion and Activities

Character Discussion:

How did your assigned character change or evolve throughout the play?

What were some key moments or scenes that contributed to the character transformation?

How did the actor's portrayal contribute to your understanding of the character's development?

How was puppetry used to transport the audience or evoke a sense of wonder? Why do you think a puppet was used instead of a live actor?

How has your understanding of the character deepened because of your observation and analysis?

Visual Art / Communication / Set Design Discussion

Facilitate a discussion where students share their observations and insights about their observations. Encourage students to discuss the factors that contribute to design choices such as scene changes, suspension of disbelief and to reflect the sentiment of the script and central themes.

Ask questions such as:

- What worked really well?
- What were some key moments or scenes where the set became 'alive'?
- How was the set used to tell parts of the story?



Post – Show Activities

Activity 1: Puppetry/ Object Theatre/ Material Properties (Drama, Visual Art, Visual Communication)

Objectives:

- Use a 'design-led' approach to create a scene
- Explore material properties to discover how they can be manipulated into characters/ set pieces and props
- Explore puppetry elements through materials, action words and imagery

Preparation:

Prepare two selection boxes or hats and label them A and B.

In box A place the following ACTION words:

Throw, Twist, Fold, Wrap, Shake, Pull, Push, Flap, Stretch, Bend, Billow, Stomp
Flatten, Scrunch, Tug, Roll, Smother, Flick, Curl, Balloon

In box B place the following IMAGE words:

Window, Door, Stairs, Rope, Treasure chest, Steering wheel, Umbrella, Spear, Shield,
Whip, Handcuffs, Sleeping bag, Magic carpet, Car, Amulet, Trunk, Suitcase, Night light
/ lamp, Cloud, Letter, Ladder, Boat, Sail, Newspaper, Table



Post – Show Activities

Activity 1: Puppetry/ Object Theatre/ Material Properties (Drama, Visual Art, Visual Communication)

Instructions:

Part 1. Discuss

Ask the students to think about a time in their childhood when they used an object in multiple ways. For example, a bed sheet might have been an ocean, a river, a tent, or a ghost costume. What did they do to the object/ material to make it represent the thing it was imitating. For example, they may have shaken a sheet up and down to create ocean waves or wrapped themselves in a curtain as a wedding dress. Encourage students to share their answers with class.

Part 2. Explore And Create / Devise

Divide students into groups of 3 – 4.

Provide each group with a large piece of fabric or material (e.g. canvas, curtains, brown paper, light sheer fabric, tulle, hessian fabric, large soft plastic, large pieces of bubble wrap etc).

Each group then chooses 2-3 ACTION words and 2 – 3 IMAGE words to explore from the hats or selection boxes.

Encourage students to spend 15 – 20 minutes exploring the material. Ask them to use the ACTION words to manipulate/ control the material (i.e. pull, fold, shake, flap), to see what shapes they can make with it and how the material moves

Then ask them to choose one of the 2 – 3 ACTION words they explored to create an object from their 2 – 3 IMAGE words (e.g. Shake the fabric in a way that makes it look like a sail).

Part 3. Transform And Expand

Once the students have created something by manipulating the material, ask them to use another one of their ACTION words (ie wrap, fold, smother) to transform the OBJECT/IMAGE into something completely different from their first OBJECT/IMAGE.

For example, in part 2, students might use a large piece of brown paper and fold it into a newspaper, then in part 3 they shake the fabric and hold it over their heads as an umbrella.

Post – Show Activities

Activity 2: Puppetry / Visual Theatre / Ensemble Work School of Fish (Drama)

Objectives

- Explore puppetry manipulation techniques
- Use ensemble training to build stage dynamics, tension, and release
- Use ensemble training to develop awareness of other performers and listening skills for working in unison.

Instructions:

Part 1

Introduce Dead Puppet Society's 3 principles of puppetry:

- Focus point / the eyes of the puppet and its source of intelligence
- Breath / the puppet's breath and emotional state
- Gravity / the puppet's weight, tension, balance, and kinaesthetic intelligence

Part 2

Experiment with puppetry principles:

Focus Point

Ask the students to choose an object in the classroom (eg. stapler, scissors, glasses, laptop charger, pencil case.

Instruct the students to indicate where they think the eyes of the object would be if it were to be animated/ characterised.

Students may wish to use stickers to indicate where the eyes are.

Instruct students to use their object to look around the room/ make eye contact with other students. What does it think about the things it sees?

Breath

Encourage students to match their breath to the puppet or object and experiment with different types of breathing. How would their object breathe if they were

anticipating something scary, if they were disappointed/ surprised/ shocked/ devastated etc. (sighing, panting, gasping, huffing, wheezing). Ask them to show a "lightbulb moment" through an intake of breath or gasp.

Gravity / Weight

Movement is the essence of puppetry. It is important to establishing gravity and weight, so the puppet does not float. Perceived gravity / weight of the puppet distinguishes puppetry from playing with dolls or toys.

Encourage students to experiment with how their object/character moves in a way that makes it appear heavier/ lighter than it is. How does the object "lumber over" to a new standing position- even if it is floating in the air? How does an object flit or zoom or crawl. Ask students to experiment with different "walk cycles".

Part 3

Ensemble training

Ask students to stand in an open space, holding their object in front of them.

Instruct them to move around the space without bumping into or speaking to anyone keeping in mind the principles of puppetry focus, breath and gravity.

Provide students with verbal prompts to explore ensemble work

Examples:

1. Move around the space with your object panting, sighing, gasping or using a breath motivated action, such as swimming or diving.

2. Without speaking, move around the space and form a group with three other students. As a small ensemble of three, continue to move around the space together as a group of three, adopting the same movement qualities as each other. Find a moment to stop, pause, change direction and then split apart from your group.
3. Ask the class to stand with their object facing the instructor / teacher. Tell the students to imagine their object is watching a tsunami wave approaching them and there is nowhere to run. You could narrate the proximity of the wave either using body language or words.
4. What happens next? What do the students do as the wave approaches, just need more of a prompt of the parameters here- do their characters panic, try to get away? Hide? Are they too slow to move so they get caught in the tsunami? Do they get to swim in the tsunami?

Post – Show Activities

Activity 3: Tableau Scenes (Drama, Visual Art, Visual Communication)

Objectives:

- To deepen students' understanding of character dynamics and themes in Peter and the Starcatcher through the creation and performance of tableau scenes.
- To engage in a creative exploration of character dynamics and themes in Peter and the Starcatcher.
- To foster deeper comprehension and appreciation of the play's narrative and emotional depth.

Instructions:

1. Introduction to Tableau (15 minutes)

Begin by explaining the concept of tableau to the students. Describe it as a silent and still portrayal of a scene or moment, where actors freeze in poses to convey emotion, relationships, and themes. Provide examples or demonstrate a simple tableau to illustrate the concept.

2. Scene Selection (15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups and have each group select a key scene from the play. Remind students to choose a scene that allows for meaningful exploration of characters' emotions, conflicts, and relationships with others.

3. Tableau Creation (30 minutes)

In their groups, instruct students to work together to create a tableau scene that captures the essence of the selected moment from the play. Encourage them to experiment with different poses, facial expressions, and spatial relationships to convey the dynamics of the scene and the inner world of their character.

4. Rehearsal and Refinement (30 minutes)

Give students time to rehearse and refine their tableau scenes. Encourage them to focus on subtlety, precision, and coordination to convey the nuances of their characters' emotions and relationships.

5. Performance and Reflection

Have each group perform their tableau scene for the class. After each performance, facilitate a brief discussion where students reflect on the effectiveness of the tableau in conveying the character's personality, motivations, and relationships. Encourage classmates to provide feedback.

6. Group Discussion and Extension

Conclude the activity with a group discussion where students reflect on the insights gained from both creating and observing the tableau scenes. Prompt them to consider how the tableau format enhanced their understanding of the characters and themes in Peter and the Starcatcher. Encourage students to draw connections between the characters' experiences and emotions depicted in the scenes and their own lives.

Tips:

- Encourage students to experiment with incorporating elements of physicality, facial expressions, and spatial composition into their tableau scenes to convey meaning effectively.
- Consider playing music or sound effects during the performances to enhance the mood and ambiance.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore alternative interpretations of the selected scenes, encouraging creativity and critical thinking.

Post – Show Activities

Activity 4: Wearable art (Drama, Visual Art, Visual Communication)

Objectives:

To consider material properties and how they can be used in multiple ways to tell a story, create costumes etc.

1. Divide students into groups of three to four. Use mannequins or one of the students as a base
2. Give each group a box of one material E.g. Plastic bags, Newspapers, Toilet paper, Styrofoam
3. Ask students to design a costume for one of the characters in Peter and the Starcatcher using the provided material. (Limit design time to 20 minutes)
4. Set the timer to 60 minutes and ask the students to create the costume using only the material provided and masking tape or gaffer tape.

Post-Performance Gender Roles Reflection and Discussion

(English, Drama) Ask students to consider how their understanding of gender roles has evolved through the exploration of Peter and the Starcatcher and Victorian England. Encourage them to reflect on the importance of challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality.



Queensland Curriculum Connections

Queensland teacher resource compiled and created by Stephanie Tudor.

The curriculum connections are provided based on the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) General Drama Senior Syllabus Drama (2019 v1.1 and 2025 v1.0).

Dramatic Form and Style

Contemporary Theatre including Design-Led Theatre
Visual Theatre, including Object Theatre
Linear storytelling
Contemporary Realism
Magical Realism

Dramatic Conventions

Openness of form
Hybridity
Puppetry
Movement sequence
Dance
Song
Fluidity of space
Surreal transformations
Shadow screen
Poetic imagery
Multiple role

Share: How does Peter and the Starcatcher celebrate the power of storytelling through its exploration of friendship, imagination, and wonder?

Reflect: How does Peter and the Starcatcher manipulate contemporary dramatic styles to reflect the experiences of growing up and loss of identity?

Elements of Drama discussion

Role Relationship Character

Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience?

How would you describe each character? How are their characters portrayed through the actors' voices and movements?

How does the incorporation of music assist in creating character?

What key relationships were present? How would you describe them?

Loyalty and friendship are key themes in the production. How did these strong relationships impact the characters throughout?

What are Peter's central motivations? How is this shown through his actions?

How does the use of narration assist in developing character and role?

Consider Molly and Peter's characters at the start of the production. How does this shift and change throughout? What are the key moments that lead to these changes?

Tension

What were some of the key examples of tension during the production?

Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience?

How did the tension engage you?

What were you invested in?

How does the mystery impact the creation of tension?

How did the music and use of projections impact the development of tension?

Focus

Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience?

Think about the moments onstage where dramatic focus shifted. What happened onstage to facilitate this change?

How did the narration of events impact the development of the plot or key themes in the production?

How were music and song used to shift the dramatic focus?

Time

When was it written?

When is the production set?

How does the time period impact the characters and the narrative? Consider especially Peter and Molly's background and also the way Molly is expected to behave.

How would changing the time impact the play's dramatic meaning?

Mollusk Island is a timeless place, how is this communicated to the audience?

Place

The production uses minimal staging to create place. Consider what else occurs onstage to create place.

How is place contrasted between Act 1 and Act 2? What design elements assist in creating this contrast?

How were puppets used to shape place?

How are the multiple locations shown onstage?

Space

Analyse the different ways that the stage was used throughout the production.

How did the use of the space help to convey the different settings and locations?

How was space used to drive narrative and tension?

How did the focus change between moments of song to moments of just dialogue? What happened onstage to facilitate this change?

How did the lighting enhance the different use of the space?

How was space manipulated to convey both big epic moments and intimate moments?

Movement

Consider how relationships in the play are communicated through body language and movement. Consider how you can show a relationship without "explaining" it.

Was the movement symbolic in any way?

How was movement contrasted by stillness? What effect did this have?

Movement is also used in the form of choreography, how did this help convey meaning and shape action?

Movement sequences are often used to shape place, how was this used throughout? Think of a movement where this was particularly impactful.

Consider the movement of the various puppets. How did they move throughout the space? What did this communicate to the audience about them?

Language

How were words used to create power?

What was the subtext behind some of the memorable lines?

How was language used to shape character? Consider the different ways each character speaks / uses language. Consider especially the contrast between Act 1 and Act 2.

How was language used to convey time and place?

Contrast

Describe two contrasting moments in Peter and the Starcatcher. How were these moments created through sound, lighting, voice and movement?

Analyse the ways in which contrast is used throughout the play in relation to the range of moods.

What evidence of contrast did you see in each of the characters? What impact did this have on the narrative and / or tension?

What other elements of contrast did you see throughout the production?

Mood

Discuss the impact of the sound design and music used to create specific moods. Use specific moments of dramatic action from the show and discuss how they made the audience feel.

Consider how they would have been different if different artistic choices were made, such as alternative lighting or sound.

Consider the mood at the start of the play. How does this contrast with the end of the play? Think about the changes between Act 1 and Act 2 as well.

How does the incorporation of music impact the creation of mood?

How did you feel when Molly decided to return? What performance techniques and skills did the actors use to make you feel this way?

How did the use of Visual Theatre impact the shaping of mood?

Symbol

Discuss the impact of the symbolic nature of the set. How did this impact your understanding of the production and the narrative?

What elements of symbols were found in the production?

Assessment Ideas

Extended Response

Task 1

"We have really picked up the playfulness and the joy of storytelling that is apparent in the script and thrown pretty much everything we've got in our theatre-making toolbelt at it."
David Morton

After viewing Peter and the Starcatcher, evaluate the effectiveness of the production by analysing the on-stage dramatic action and how the use of the dramatic languages created dramatic meaning. In your response consider how the play uses Contemporary Theatre conventions to facilitate the character's journey. Support your statements with perceptive and thorough evaluation and supporting evidence from key moments in the production. Use appropriate drama terminology throughout your essay.

Task 2

"The story simultaneously being told and celebrated is as elaborate, simple, cozy and scary as the best bedtime stories are." Ben Brantley (American critic and journalist)

How do key moments from Peter and the Starcatcher explore the concept of 'imagination' as outlined in the stimulus above? Argue a position about the manipulation of the key convention of puppetry alongside two elements of situation and contrast created dramatic action and meaning.

Task 3

How do key moments from Peter and the Starcatcher explore the concept

of connection outlined in the stimulus above? Argue a position about how the manipulation of the chorus alongside relationship and mood created dramatic action and meaning.

Dramatic Concept (2019 V1.1)

Task

Working as a theatremaker you will view Peter and the Starcatcher. Using this as stimulus, you must identify one key convention of storytelling used in this production and devise an original dramatic concept that shares an understanding of the human experience.

Your dramatic concept must organise information under the following headings:

Analysis and evaluation (400 words)

How was the convention manipulated to contribute to the communication of the shared human experience?

My concept (800 words, 10 – 12 images)

Identify a chosen purpose and context.

Make specific reference to the original chosen convention.

Argue how the dramatic languages have been used to communicate dramatic action and meaning.

Develop a storyboard with explanatory paragraphs and annotations that document your dramatic ideas.

Dramatic Concept (2025 V1.0)

After viewing Peter and the Starcatcher, consider how it uses storytelling to share understandings of the human experiences. Using this as stimulus, you will devise your own dramatic concept.

Multimodal (at least two modes, written and digital, delivered at the same time): up to 1500 words, including:

A statement of intent

A sequenced digital record of key moments of the devised concept — one of the following

- up to 12 photographs of staged dramatic action
- up to 3 filmed moments of staged dramatic action (up to a total of 90 seconds)
- up to 8 photographs of staged dramatic action, and 1 filmed moment of staged dramatic action (up to 30 seconds)

Scripted dialogue: up to 500 words (Note: Any dialogue in filmed moments must be included in the scripted dialogue.)

When taking inspiration from Peter and the Starcatcher, you can draw upon any use of convention, design element, use of form, manipulation of the elements, stagecraft or stylistic characteristics.

To begin:

In 3 minutes, brainstorm what moments stood out to you from the production and why? Try to write as much as possible without thinking about it too much.

Next, reread what you have written. With different colours, highlight each reference to convention, design element, use of form, manipulation of the elements, stagecraft or stylistic characteristics.

Distil what you have highlighted into three points. Identify what manipulation of the dramatic languages you most connected with from the original work.

Brainstorm answers to the following questions:

- What does storytelling mean to you?
- What needs celebrating in the world right now?
- Who should we empower by telling their story?
- What is an event or person you wish you knew more about?
- What does being human mean to you?
- How are we all connected?
- What do you wish we spoke about more?
- What would your TED talk be about?

Using the answer to the questions above, go through the same process, highlight key ideas or themes. Distil what you have highlighted into three main points.

Pick one of these to workshop with actors. Create a short improvisation exploring that idea / that question.

Go back to your first list, pick one of the first three dot points. Use this to help shape your improvisation.

Workshop your ideas in the space.

To continue:

Find an article in the newspaper / a historical document / a retelling of an event that is related to your key issue or idea.

Use 'sentence / phrase / word thinking activity.'

Using the key words and phrases from the sentence / phrase / word activity, ask students to brainstorm about these for 1 – 2 minutes. Challenge students to write

continuously, not to think but just to get some ideas out.

Using this brainstorm, identify the key ideas that emerged as well as the key stakeholders. Who does this impact?

Build a freeze frame that captures this idea, the key stakeholder or a key moment that represents the human side to the issue.

Ask students to create a freeze frame that happened before and after the event.

Start running these three freeze frames together. Explore the transitions. What is the narrative they have started to tell? What is the point of view they are focusing on?

Continue to workshop these.

You may then want to

- Write key dialogue that represents your idea
- Create a storyboard with moments of key action
- Continue to workshop these in the class to create a short scene

Post-Show Discussion

Share & Reflect

What messages are relevant to a contemporary audience?

What directorial choices stood out to you?

Why do you think this story was told using music?

How does the introduction of music enhance the narrative? What would change if the songs were removed?

What difficult decisions did the characters face? How did they approach these?

How does the story of Peter connect with the audience to share an understanding of the 'human experience'? What experiences, that Peter goes through, are central to all of us?

Director David Morton commented "In Peter and the Starcatcher, a show about the imagination, the puppets we've used are an integral part, not only of building the world but of generating that special kind of imaginative connection that this sort of theatre can build." How do the use of puppets and visual theatre help create a magical world? Consider the conventions of magical realism.

What impact did the final scene have on your understanding of the production and the characters?

How have they shaped the magical world of Mollusk Island?

Magical realism comes from the psychological experience of the character. What is Peter searching for? What does 'Neverland' represent?

In most magical realism pieces the magic leaves. There are two very clear worlds set up – the world of 'reality' of England that Molly returns to. Why does Peter stay within the world of magic?

Post-Show Activities

Music Serves the Story

When examining a play with music, it is important to consider how music is used. Often a play with music uses music to create mood, place and to underscore or highlight important moments.

However, sometimes in a play with music, the music exists to help bring that story to life and drive the narrative forward. The music works to serve the plot, to make you feel what the characters feel, not just to illuminate moments of great tension and drama. Consider the purpose of the songs in Peter and the Starcatcher and examine the list below. Which do you think apply to the music in Peter and the Starcatcher?

- introduce the characters
- tell the audience what a character wants or needs
- sets up the inner turmoil or
- express the characters thoughts and feelings
- to move the action or characters forward in a keyway: transition, realization, and decision.
- give the audience an understanding about what came before or has brought a character to a certain point
- express conflict between two or more characters
- narrate events that occurred offstage
- summarise what has occurred

However, when talking about one of the key differences between a musical and a play with songs is the frequency of the songs throughout and if removing the songs would completely change the audience's understanding of the plot and the characters' journey. Adapted from : <https://larryavisbrown.com/dramatic-function-of-songs-in-musicals/>

- What are the different ways that songs have been used in this production?

• What do you notice about how the actors use their voices, movements, gestures and facial expressions when transitioning from dialogue to song?

• How did the additional of music and song enhance the narrative?

Read: Story Design: The 7 Plot Points <https://www.musicalwriters.com/writing-a-/story-design-the-7-plot-points/>

- Do you think Peter and the Starcatcher follows this structure? Why / why not?
- Would you consider Peter and the Starcatcher a musical or a play with music?
- Using this structure, brainstorm your own ideas for a show. Where would you include music?
- Would you create a musical or a play with music?
- How would music serve your intended purpose?

Gallery Walk of Questions

Using a Gallery Walk to explore the questions that students have after seeing a production is a great way to build an understanding of what the students are thinking in a safe space. It allows them to ask questions anonymously but also provides an opportunity to contribute by working together to answer other's questions.

After using the post-show discussion questions and talking to the students about the production, what they connected with, what they enjoyed etc, have students write down the questions they still have on a post it note and put these up around the classroom.

Students are to walk around the class in a gallery walk and choose two questions that aren't their own. One that they think they can answer and one that they want to know the answer to.

Using these post it notes, work through the questions and use these to form a larger class discussion.

Identity

Ask students to consider who they are, and how their individual identity has been shaped. Ask them to create a mind map that unpacks their identity. Encourage them to consider how they would describe themselves and put any key information on the mind map. You could also do this activity practically and have students talk to another student about 'who they are.'

After this ask students to examine what they have written down or what they said and ask them to consider

- What factors shaped your identity?
- What parts of your identity have been shaped by your family, friends, culture or community?
- What parts of your identity are at odds with those of your family, friends, culture or community?

Ask students to draw the outline of a person.

Label these and put them around the classroom. Ask students to go around and on the outside of each 'person' they are to write something about that classmate.

Students are to then get their person back and fill in the inside with how they see themselves. Look at the communalities and differences between how their classmates see them, to who they want to be / they are.

Have a discussion about the following questions

- What happens when others view us differently than we view ourselves?
- What parts of your identity do you choose for yourself?
- What parts of your identity do you think are determined by others, by society, or by chance?
- Whose opinions and beliefs have the greatest effect on how you think about your own identity?

Ask students to then consider these questions from the point of view of Peter and The Starcatcher.

- How are characters' identities conveyed on Mollusk Island? Consider the use of Visual Theatre and Magical Realism.
- How do the characters' identities shift throughout the production? How do they influence this shift in each other?
- Consider the way the characters stand up for themselves. How does this contribute to who they are?
- Friendship and loyalty are key themes. How does this shape the central characters' identity?

Direct Address and the Narrator

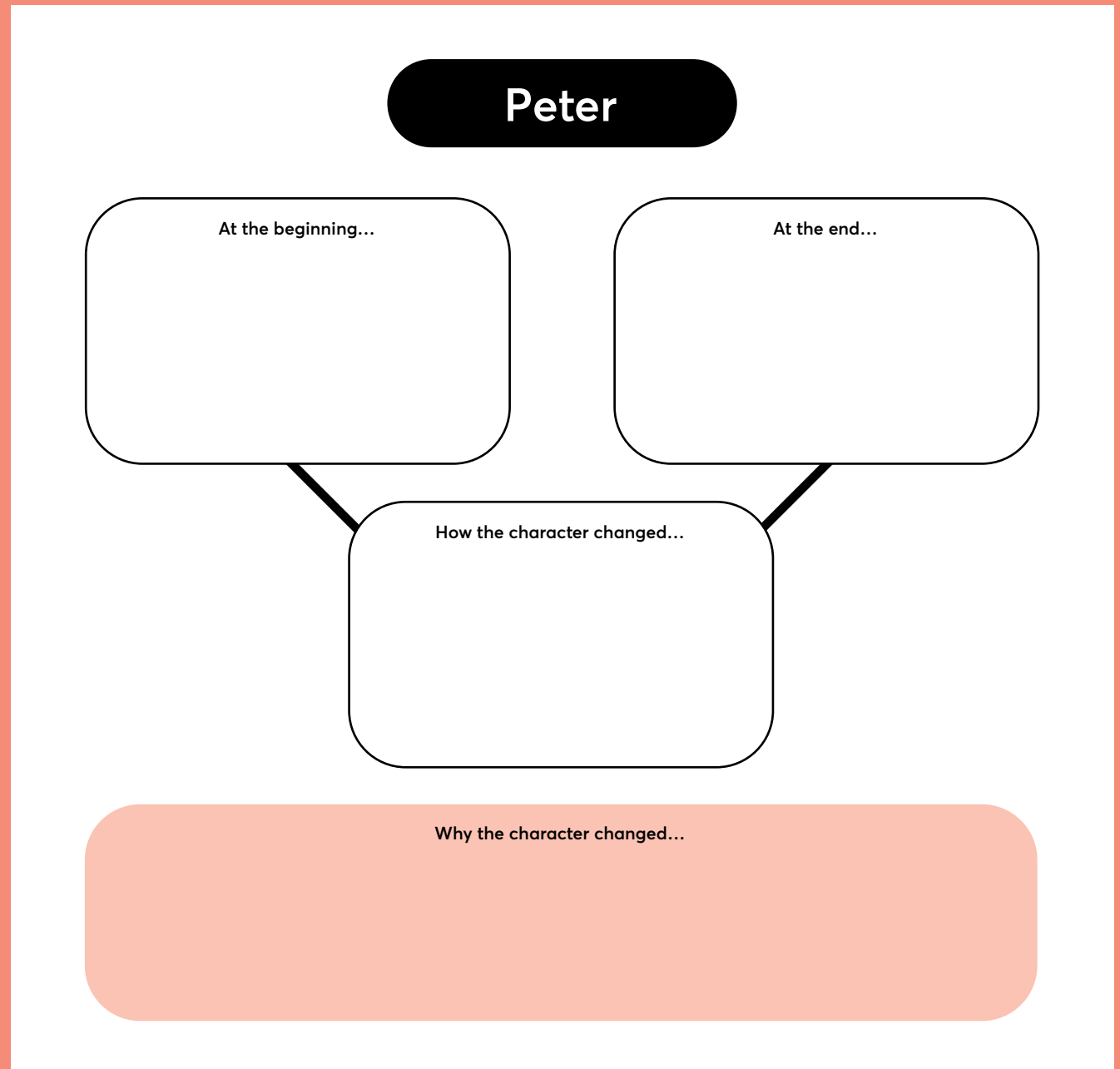
Peter and the Starcatcher uses both direct address and narration to help tell the story. Lead students in a discussion about their understanding of direct address and narration as conventions. How are they different and where is there an overlap? Then use the following task to have students explore what shifts when we see a production that relies heavily on narration and direct address.

Task:

- Form groups of 3 – 4.
- Have the group improvise an everyday scene. Ensure that the interactions convey the characters' relationship with each other.
- Perform the scenes.
- Discuss direct address with the students
- When would this be used?
- Why would it be used?
- How does it impact / enhance the dramatic action?
- Focus on the different purposes of direct address; what are the actors trying to do to the audience? Are they trying to explain their actions? Are they confiding in the audience? Are they trying to scheme with the audience? Are they simply telling the audience what is occurring?
- Repeat the scene but have one of the characters have moments where they address the audience. Ask them to consider:
- Who breaks out of the scene to address the audience and at what moments does this occur?
- What do the rest of the actors do? Does the action continue? Does everything go into slow motion? Does everyone else freeze? Do they acknowledge the direct address as it occurs?
- Do the actors look at the audience or are they watching the actions of the scene?
- When addressing the audience, are they still in character? Are they emotionally attached or detached to the scene?
- How does it impact / enhance the dramatic action?
- Focus on the different purposes of direct address; what are the actors trying to do to the audience? Are they trying to explain their actions? Are they confiding in the audience? Are they trying to scheme with the audience? Are they simply telling the audience what is occurring?
- Show the new scenes and discuss, what has changed? How do you view or understand the characters and events differently than you did before? Are the characters reliable to unreliable narrators?

Character Change

Provide evidence from the play to support your statements



Victorian (VCAA) Curriculum Links

Curriculum Links for Years 7-10 (The Arts)

Drama

- Explore and Express Ideas:
- Students engage in a comprehensive analysis of play elements, including staging, character portrayal, and theatrical components.
- Themes like Friendship and Loyalty, Coming of Age, Theatricality, and are explored through devised and scripted drama elements and creates opportunities for discussion in class.
- Students not only examine these themes but also delve into the ways they are interwoven into the fabric of stagecraft, fostering a holistic comprehension of dramatic expression.
- Drama Practices:
- The incorporation of actors and puppetry enhances audience engagement, giving students the opportunity to explore a variety of dramatic practices and incorporate in their own work.
- Students explore the intricacies of puppetry, recognising its potential to add layers of depth to the narrative and the relationship between symbolism, metaphor, and dramatic practice.
- Students can delve into set and costume design, examining their contributions to conveying meaning and fostering audience connection.

- Present and Perform:
- Observing both devised and scripted drama, students observe an example of character development in a variety of contexts.
- Through this exploration, students gain insights into the visual language of drama.
- Students see an example of how to apply stagecraft techniques, to construct immersive imaginary worlds.
- Students see an experimentation with various performance styles, incorporating puppetry, song, and choreography. This multidimensional approach adds layers of creativity to their understanding of the performative arts.
- Respond and Interpret:
- Discussion can extend to the deliberate artistic choices made in devised and scripted drama, shedding light on how design elements convey dramatic meaning.

Media Arts

- Media Arts Practices:
- Students can immerse themselves in media production, utilising technical and symbolic elements to convey specific narratives.
- The Victorian era serves as a captivating backdrop, allowing students to explore historical and social nuances, particularly focusing on themes like the role of children, social class, and various socio-political movements.
- Respond and Interpret:
- Dissecting gender roles and power dynamics within the play, students

- can unravel how these complex concepts are conveyed through multimedia elements and projections.
- The play serves as a lens for students to understand the interplay between storytelling and visual expression in media practices.

Music

- Respond and Interpret:
- Students have the opportunity to analyse musical elements and stylistic features integrated into Peter and the Starcatcher, elevating the overall theatrical experience.
- Live music in the play frequently underscores on-stage action, crafting an immersive atmosphere that significantly contributes to the enchanting and whimsical tone.

Visual Arts

- Explore and Express Ideas:
- Delving into the ways artists manipulate materials, techniques, technologies, and processes, students can draw inspiration from set and costume design in their own artistic expression.
- Experimentation with a diverse array of materials, techniques, technologies, and processes across various art forms allows students to convey ideas, concepts, and themes in their artworks.
- Visual Arts Practices:
- Set designers in Peter and the Starcatcher play a crucial role in breathing life into a world that is both magical and fantastical, with the set design becoming a canvas for visual designs.

- The broader role of visual arts in creating props and visual effects is acknowledged, collectively contributing to the overall visual spectacle of the play.

Visual Communication Design

- Explore and Represent Ideas:
- The exploration and application of diverse methods, materials, media, design elements, and principles play a pivotal role and students have an opportunity to explore how these are used to convey meaning and audience engagement.
- Students can observe how to infuse work with innovation and creativity.
- Respond and Interpret:
- Purpose, intended audience, and contextual nuances across various historical, social, and cultural settings.
- The play's themes of adventure, friendship, and the power of imagination provide profound inspiration for designers, who can incorporate these themes into their visual communication designs, elevating their own work with depth and resonance.

Curriculum Link – Capabilities (Critical and Creative Thinking)

Critical Thinking:

1. Character Analysis
 - Students can examine characters' actions, motivations, and development throughout the play.
2. Plot Examination:
 - Students evaluate the plot structure, identifying the cause-and-effect relationships between events.
3. Theme Exploration:
 - Resonate and explore central themes, such as friendship, identity, and the power of imagination.
4. Symbolism and Imagery:
 - Witness symbolic elements and imagery used in the play including how metaphor and visual theatre is used to convey meaning and audience engagement.

Creative Thinking:

1. Alternative Narratives:
 - Reimagining the story and thinking of alternative plot developments or character choices.
2. Character Backstories:
 - Thinking about characters' backstories and how they could influence the characters' actions in the play.

Ethical

1. Cultural Sensitivity – address portrayal of different cultures with care.
2. Gender Representation – examine and challenge traditional gender roles.
3. Childhood and Growing Up – explore the ethical dimensions of staying young forever and growing up.
4. Environmental Ethics – consider the consequences of magical elements like 'starstuff' on the environment.
5. Power Dynamics – analyse the ethical implications of characters' power struggles.
6. Friendship and Loyalty – reflect on the ethical aspects of characters' actions and relationships.
7. Respect for Source Material – ensure a respectful adaptation of the Peter Pan story and consider how best to credit original authors.

Intercultural

Students can observe a thoughtful and respectful approach to adapting and presenting material embracing diversity and being mindful of cultural safety throughout the process of creating the play.

1. Cultural Influences in the Original Source Material:

- J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan is rooted in Western literature and culture. The original story reflects the societal norms and values of its time (early 20th century).
 - In adapting the material, the creators had to navigate the challenge of preserving the essence of the original while incorporating their own interpretations.
2. Incorporation of Folklore or Mythology:

Peter and the Starcatcher delves into the origin story of Peter Pan, and involves incorporating elements of folklore or mythology with care and respect to accurate representation of the cultural aspects.

Personal and Social

Personal:

The play explores identity, friendship, resilience, and bravery. Characters undergo journeys of self-discovery, emphasising themes of loyalty and overcoming fears.

Social:

The play explores class distinctions, authority, rebellion, and the impact of exploration and colonisation. Molly's character challenges gender roles, prompting discussions about equality and stereotypes.

The play weaves together personal growth and societal reflections promoting rich terrain for future discussion.



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