

Underneath a Magical Moon

A reimagining of Peter Pan as told by Wendy Darling



*Written by Mike Kenny
for children age 3 upwards*

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Through her open window Wendy Darling gazes out at the night sky dreaming of blue lagoons, magical moons and the stories that she can tell.

But tonight, like no other, has magic in the air...

tutti frutti and York Theatre Royal team up with leading playwright Mike Kenny to re-imagine the enchanting story of Peter Pan as told by Wendy.

Wendy Darling is the owner of stories, mother to the lost boys, a believer in fairies, and a young girl with her feet firmly on the ground.

Come with us as we invite you to fly into a fantastical world of adventure, where time stands still, and the impossible seems possible and if you close your eyes and believe, then you really can make anything happen.

A sparkling production with exquisite music, enthralling movement and a sprinkle of tutti frutti magic.

“Peter Pan” presented by special arrangement with GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL CHILDREN’S CHARITY AND SAMUEL FRENCH INC.

tutti frutti enraptures its young audience with a wonderful and warm piece of theatre. The Stage



Press Quotes

Mike Kenny - Playwright

“Peter Pan was one of the first real children’s classics. Maybe the first children’s classic play. I still struggle to think of anything that can top it. Everyone understands the feeling of not wanting to grow up. I loved it as a child, and my children loved it too. It’s such a great piece, with such a broad sweep that it can stand various interpretations, and so I’ve delved into just one part of it.

It was first performed in 1904. The generation of boys that first saw it as children would be the generation of young men that fought and died in the First World War. When you hear Peter say, ‘To die would be an awfully big adventure’ it carries a real frisson. Wendy, however, has a different arc. She is recruited by Peter to be the mother to the Lost Boys, and she takes to it with gusto. I just wondered, if now, over a hundred years later, if that would be quite so straight forward for her.

Our version is the story you would recognise, but our Wendy is thinking about what she wants to be when she grows up. She’s not quite so willing to stay at home telling stories to the children, while Peter goes off and has all the adventures. She wants to have some adventures of her own.”

Wendy Harris - Director

“We wanted to create a new show that has a timeless appeal for audiences. What better than taking the magical story of Peter Pan. We have taken all the familiar elements from the story and retold it with an ensemble of 3 actor/musicians. With Mike Kenny’s charming adaptation, set in Wendy’s house in the garden, and Ivan Stott’s funny and unforgettable songs we hope audiences will enjoy this retelling. We promise a very visually appealing set from Kate Bunce, with lots of sparkle, and fairy dust. Plus, some physical pirate action choreographed by the brilliant Holly Irving. We have taken this epic and familiar story and shaped it into a story suitable for young children lasting just under an hour. If you believe in fairies and pirates, this is must see.”



Underneath a Magical Moon – The Story

Synopsis of play

Underneath a Magical Moon is set in an ordinary back yard, where three children, Wendy, John and Michael, do a sleep out, one summer evening. However, it's a full moon, and Wendy just can't get to sleep and she begins to tell her brothers the story of Peter Pan. Slowly but surely they are drawn into the famous tale. They become Peter himself, the villainous Captain Hook, Tinkerbell, a bunch of Lost boys, a crocodile and a gaggle of Mermaids. They fly, they swim, they sail and fight battles, and conjure up Neverland in their own back yard.

The boy who wouldn't grow up has a hold over their imagination. They all begin to wonder about how they actually feel about growing up, who they will become, and what they'll take from their childhoods.

Please tell us what you thought of the show by sending feedback, drawings and photos to hello@tutti-frutti.org.uk or post via facebook or twitter.

Q+A With Playwright Mike Kenny

How did you get involved in writing *Underneath a Magical Moon for tutti frutti*?

I've written many plays for tutti frutti in the past, and it's a healthy relationship, as most of the plays emerge from an ongoing conversation. This one was very much Wendy's idea though. Because of her name, she had always had a very strong relationship and a fascination with the character of Wendy Darling.

From where did the idea of re-imagining the story of Peter Pan from the perspective of Wendy come?

My version starts with a modern family, of Wendy and her two brothers doing a sleep out in their back yard. In a Wendy House! Wendy starts to tell the story and all three soon become actively involved in it. It is the story you would remember but trimmed down. It is powered by the imagination of the three children.

Can you tell us about your version of the classic story?

Peter Pan, the story has suffered many indignities over the years, in all its many incarnations, but it does seem to survive. I think that's because it's such an amazing story, a bona fide children's classic. I particularly love it, because as a children's playwright myself, Peter Pan started its life as play, before it became a book, a film, an animation, a Panto and a musical. I think it can bear retelling many times in many different ways.

How challenging is it to write a new version of a classic children's tale when your young audiences have been brought up with stage versions at Christmas and also the many animated and film versions?

It does pose huge challenges, because it's actually so dense and mysterious, and told on an epic scale. We are telling it with a cast of three. It's already distilled and to try to further reduce it is hard. Neither Wendy nor I were happy with the first version I did. It was almost as if I was trying to describe and explain Peter Pan, trying to get everything in. So I took it back to the drawing board and almost completely rewrote it. Now, it's more fun, and more magical.

If you have to sum up the play in 3 words, what would they be?

Fun, exciting, magical.

How does *Underneath a Magical Moon* stand out in a crowded children's show market?

How does it stand out in a crowded market? I find this one very difficult to answer without sounding big headed. We are the best at what we do. We take the work very seriously. No corners are cut.

We genuinely think about, and care about children. Wendy always puts together creative teams that are at the top of their game. What comes out at the end, is hopefully, beautiful, funny, and meaningful. On a personal note, I think that tutti frutti respects the craft of the playwright. There are many companies producing work that looks and sounds good but lacks the good story telling brought by a good play.

How did you start your career?

After training as an English and drama teacher I came to Leeds to become an actor/teacher in the Theatre in Education Company at the old Leeds Playhouse. We were employed full time to create plays and drama programmers that would play to Leeds school children. I stayed for nearly 10 years acting, teaching, writing, and when I left, I free-lanced as an actor for a couple of years. Work for children was always most interesting to me and slowly and surely, I began to devise and write plays for children and young people. Since then I have written around 100 plays.

Who were and are your inspirations when it comes to writing?

My inspirations. When I began working in Leeds Theatre in Education in the late 70s, the field was full of the most creative people. I suppose it felt as though we were inventing and creating a form as we worked. In those early days, I found teachers like Dorothy Heathcote, and thinkers like Bruno Bettelheim as inspiring as the big theatre names like Brook, Becket and Brecht. To be honest, until that time, very few people took theatre for children seriously. One wonders even now how rooted it is. It seems that theatre often falls into the category of treat, or optional extra, but if I said the same of books there would be an outcry. Yet, theatre came thousands of years before literature. These days, the people I work with inspire me.

But I think the people who have had the most profound effect on my work have been the audiences. The first play I wrote for very young audiences (The Lost Child - which incidentally Wendy worked on too) had a huge impact on how I wrote. It led to me doing Stepping Stones, which was my first play for a learning disabled audience. That changed my writing irrevocably.

Why do you mainly write for children and not adults?

I truly don't know the answer to why children. To be honest I get this question asked quite often and I don't really understand what motivates it. And I'm not sure what answer is expected. When I worked in an office in the City, which was frankly the most soul rotting thing I ever did, nobody ever asked me why. I wonder if anyone asks the question of JK Rowling or Walt Disney. Why work for children? The money? If the implication is that there's something lesser about work for children, then I would refute it. I actually think it is a vocation. It is my passion and I would discourage anyone to whom it doesn't come naturally. J M Barrie wrote some fantastic plays but only Peter Pan is a masterpiece. I think he had a vocation. The same is true of C S Lewis, Roald Dahl.

What do you think are the biggest challenges of writing for children?

My experience of children is that they are completely unimpressed by who you are and what you have done. If they are bored, they are bored, and they don't think it's their fault if they can't understand (as many adults often seem to) they think it's your fault for wasting their precious time. Keeping their attention is not easy. I just love the challenge. I often think that engaging in explaining the big issues of life, death and living to a young audience is incredibly useful. Most of my plays are as much a journey of discovery for me as they are for the audience.

How important is theatre for young children?

Arts for Children across the board, not just theatre, is a human right. The thing which makes us human is our imagination, our ability to conceive alternatives, to come together to sing, dance and hear stories. It doesn't make us better humans; it makes us more human. Our imagination got us into the chaotic state we're in, but it stands the best chance of digging us out. Empathy is what theatre develops, and it does it in a social context.

Who do you feel are the more difficult audiences to please - children or adults?

Easy to please is an odd concept. I often think adult audiences are far too easily pleased. And I think they often go to theatre to have their preconceptions stroked. The difficulty of getting new plays staged speaks to that. We are not in risk taking times. Honestly, isn't there a load of rubbish out there? Why on earth do people want to see productions of things they've seen loads of times before? A living art is being turned into a museum. My experience is that children are much more prepared to take on different material. And are more adventurous in their tastes. I don't really want to speak for the whole sector. I'll stand up for what I do. I try to do things. I try to please audiences, but I like to surprise them a bit too. My belief is that the theatre is a safe space for us to think about dangerous things.

How would you sum up a Mike Kenny Adaptation?

I think I like to honour the creative power of ordinary children. I like to be inclusive. You won't find easy stereotypes in my plays. I usually tackle quite serious subject matter, but I also wrote good jokes. I like to stretch the boundaries of theatre. I always break the fourth wall. Children know I'm talking to them, but I don't allow the grownups to sit back. Just because a piece is talented at children, it doesn't mean that the characters aren't grappling with very human issues. In this play Wendy is thinking hard about becoming a grown up, and what that means. Everyone has to wrestle with that.

How heavily are you involved in the rehearsal process for your shows?

More often than not, I leave the creative team to their own devices. My involvement comes mostly in the early stages, when I will be in conversation with Wendy, in particular, and the designer and musical director, so that we are in the same world. That is when I do the bulk of my work, and though I like to leave things very open for the other creatives, I don't leave much to chance in relation to the text.

What have been the highlights of your career?

The highlights of my career? There have been quite a few. Stepping Stones, the first play I wrote for a learning disabled audience. The audience taught me so much about life and theatre. The Railway Children, of course, The York Mysteries 2012, Blood and Chocolate, which gave me the opportunity of engaging with the city I live in. Other plays of mine that are not so well known because I often write for the very young. 'Walking the Tightrope' which talks about death, The Gardener, about aging and memory. Cinderella at the West Yorkshire Playhouse. I felt I'd managed to rescue Christmas from Panto. (Panto has fought back since) Jack, which I did for tutti frutti. And I'm very proud of a play I wrote called Boy with a Suitcase, which is about child refugees. Having said that. I tend not to dwell much in the past. Theatre happens in the present. It's a 'you had to be there' sort of art.

What is the most important piece of advice you could give someone who is thinking of starting to write plays?

I think you have to be fascinated by people, what they say and do to each other, and telling stories. You also have to be able to do very opposing things. When I'm writing I spend a lot of time on my own. I'm quite happy in my own company. However, the process of getting a play on is about talking and listening to director, actors, designer, audience, publicity people etc. You have to be equally happy engaging quite actively with people. At the heart of theatre is dialogue. I was an only child in an enormous talkative extended family, lots of aunts and uncles and cousins. My early memories are all about being under the table, listening. I think that's probably the ideal combination of factors. So what I'm saying is, if you like describing landscapes and people, don't bother. If you like always getting your own way and can't stand change, don't even begin. Engage in dialogue.

Why should audiences come and see the production?

You should come to see Underneath a Magical Moon if you like good stories, great songs and beautiful things. Also, if you like to laugh.

What's next for Mike Kenny?

Next for me? I'm currently working on a new version of Alice in Wonderland for Derby Theatre, about which I'm very excited. But I also seem to be drifting away from these shores. I've done a play for a company in Ireland. I'm working on a piece about Partition for India, and I have just got back from Australia where I was in discussions for a new play.



Activities to do straight after watching the play

1. Creating a story path as a class

Aim: Ordering key events in the story and responding to what they hear with relevant comments, questions and actions.

Mind-map the story of *Underneath a Magical Moon* with the whole class (or in smaller groups.) Draw a footpath on a long roll of paper to create the journey of the main characters.

Start the roll with the opening of the story - the children in the garden settling down for the night and ask the children to recall key events that happen in the play. Draw these along the path finishing with the end of the story, back in the garden - suggest the following inclusions;

- Can you name all the characters in the story ?
- What did they do ?
- What were the exciting parts of the story ?
- What were the funny parts of the story ?
- How did the story end?

2. Meeting the Characters; If you could meet characters people in the play what would you like to ask them or say to them? (using props from washing line)

Aim: Encouraging children to come up with their own questions and find the answers by putting themselves in the shoes of the characters.

Hang a washing line up in the class room with props relating to the different characters pegged to the line. For example;

A teddy for Michael
A torch for Wendy
A dressing gown for John
A garden tool, eye patch or golden necklace for Hook
Swimming hats for mermaids
Socks worn as bandanas for lost boys
Head scarfs for pirates
A small shiny light for tinker bell
A clock for the crocodile

Other props relating to the play could be sleeping bags , torches, a cool box or picnic basket, plant pots , buckets , sheets, little bottle of poison , little bottle of medicine .

Ask one of the children to choose a prop and describe who in the play they think it might relate to. Then invite the other children to ask the character questions about their role in the play.

Suggest the following

What do they like?

Who do they live with?

What do they do in the story ?

Are they afraid of anything or anyone?

What's important to them?

What do they like doing?

How would you describe them?

3. Creating a fantasy world based on a story

Aim: Sharing ideas and fantasies, working together. Creating a scene from a story.

In the play Wendy, Michael and John recreate Neverland, a place based on a story. Ask the children for ideas of what fantasy they could create in the classroom either based on *Underneath a Magical Moon*, a favourite book, or from their shared ideas.

Encourage them to think what elements their world will include and ask the children to bring in an item from home (their own world) to create this fantasy world/den in the classroom (see the build a den activity on the tutti frutti activities page).

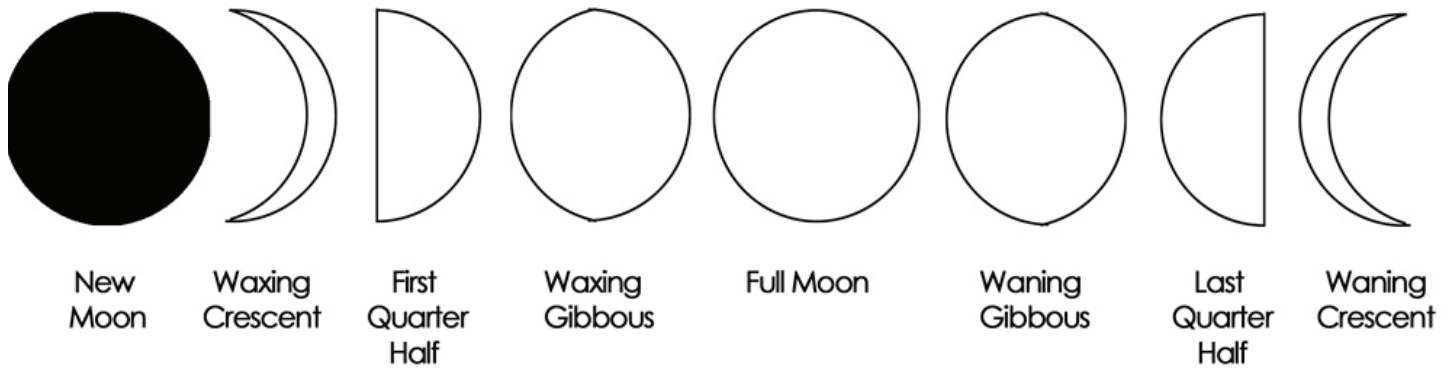
This activity could be combined with a pyjama day and story telling in the 'fantasy world'

4. Moon decorations (craft activity)

Using the crescent moon template (on the tutti frutti schools activities page) cut out moon shapes from pale grey or white card.

Give to the children to decorate. They could use paint, silver glitter, sequins, silver stars, draw their dreams/wishes on the moon - they could draw people who are special to them or draw the place they would fly to if they could choose anywhere.

This could be a Christmas decoration activity or used to decorate the classroom hung up amongst fabric/bed sheets- in billows - like clouds (basically pinned up at the corners!)



Rainy Day Activities – Phases of the moon mobile

A 'phase of the Moon' is how much of the Moon we can see down on Earth when it is lit up by the sun. The Moon goes through eight main phases approximately every 4 weeks.

Make our Magical Moon mobile to decorate your bedroom and remind you of the phases of the moon! (You could do all eight or just 4/5 if you prefer)

You will need:

- A stick or rod (needs to be long enough to accommodate all your moons!)
- String - sparkly is good!
- 8 discs of black or dark blue card - you might need a grown up to cut them out for you (draw round a lid as a guide.)
- Silver, grey or white paint
- Glitter (optional)

What to do:

1. Use our template as a guide to the different phases of the moon.
2. Take each of your eight discs in turn and paint out the bit of the moon you can see - so the full moon you will paint the whole disc and the crescent moon you will just paint the edge and the new moon you will leave the whole moon dark.
3. Sprinkle glitter over the wet paint to give your moon some sparkle!
4. Cut eight equal lengths of your string and sellotape one to each of your moons.
5. Tie the moons along your string starting with the new moon and ending with the crescent
6. Tie a piece of string to either end of your stick leaving it long enough to hang your mobile in the middle.

Please tell us what you thought of the show by sending feedback, drawings and photos to hello@tutti-frutti.org.uk or post via facebook or twitter.



Building an inside den - from household objects

Why not help the children make their own den or wendy house in the classroom like Wendy, Michael and John for indoor camping, story telling and 'midnight feasts'?!

You'll need:

- some space!
- blankets and sheets,
- chairs or a clothes airer
- cushions and pillows
- string /pegs to attach your blankets to the frame

Make your den by arranging the chairs or clothes airer as your walls and then draping a sheet or blanket over the top for your roof, secure this with string or clothes pegs. Put cushions or pillows on the floor to make it cosy. You could add decorations like fairy lights or scarves or bunting.

Encourage the children to tell their own stories (like Wendy) and tell them in the den.

Wendy, Michael and John take a clock and a midnight feast picnic of crisps, fruit, bars, yoghurt, and pop and camp out - ask the children what they will take into their den?

Please tell us what you thought of the show by sending feedback, drawings and photos to hello@tutti-frutti.org.uk or post via facebook or twitter.

Neverland



Q

Which path should Wendy follow to find Peter?

Answer: _____

Marooner's Rock



Peter



Clockodiles

Lost Boys Cave

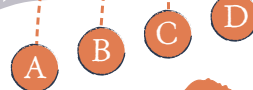
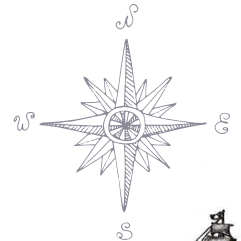
Mermaids



Blue Lagoon



Captain Hook's Ship



Wendy



Why not colour in the map once you have helped Wendy?



Find more fun things to do on our website www.tutti-frutti.org.uk