

ENCHANTMENT THEATRE COMPANY

Igniting Children's Imaginations Everywhere!

PETER RABBIT™ TALES

based on *The Original Peter Rabbit Books*™
by Beatrix Potter



By arrangement with
F. Warne and Co., 2015



ABOUT THE SHOW

Adapting Peter Rabbit for the Stage

When Enchantment Theatre Company considered adapting Beatrix Potter's tales to the stage, it was the stories featuring Peter Rabbit that immediately came to mind. Peter was Ms. Potter's first and most beloved character and he and his family appear in a number of the tales. Peter is both a wild rabbit, who needs to survive the dangers of forest and garden, and at the same time, a curious, foolish and lovable little boy. It is due to Beatrix Potter's skill as artist and writer that we can hold Peter as both these things. We discovered in re-reading the tales how central family was to the Peter Rabbit stories and how much the community of animals helped one another to survive and to flourish. From these themes we recognized an overarching narrative that brought the "rabbit tales" together into one dramatic whole. So, in our production of *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*, we draw on three of the stories: *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* and *The Tale of Mr. Tod*.

Although Peter's first adventure in Mr. McGregor's garden is known to most children, his subsequent exploits are less familiar. Instead of telling the stories in a linear fashion, we begin the play when Peter Rabbit, his cousin Benjamin and his sister Flopsy are all grown up. Peter has his own garden and Flopsy and Benjamin are married with baby bunnies of their own. When the nasty badger, Tommy Brock, decides to steal the babies, Peter and Benjamin set off on an adventure to rescue them. Along the way, Peter and Benjamin recall their childhood misadventures, and we flashback to Peter's tale – his near disastrous escapade in Mr. McGregor's garden, and then to Benjamin's tale – when he and Peter returned to the garden and were rescued by Benjamin's father. Back in the present they continue on their quest, managing to avoid the dapper and dangerous fox, Mr. Tod. During their search, Peter and Benjamin are helped by the cheeky Squirrel Nutkin, and by Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle, the kindly hedgehog. Peter and Benjamin are ultimately triumphant, as Peter hilariously pits the badger and fox against one another, rescuing the baby bunnies and returning them safely home.

Helping us bring the story to life are the lush designs of David Russell and the whimsically evocative music of Charles Gilbert. We are thrilled to bring the delightful world of Peter Rabbit to the stage and introduce a whole new generation to Beatrix Potter's enchanting and enduring tales.

Jennifer Blatchley Smith, Artistic Director, Literary and Education

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Peter Rabbit™ Tales

Story Adapted by Jennifer Blatchley Smith, Leslie Reidel and Landis Smith

Music by Charles Gilbert

Based on *The Original Peter Rabbit Books*™ by Beatrix Potter

By arrangement with Frederick Warne & Co Limited,
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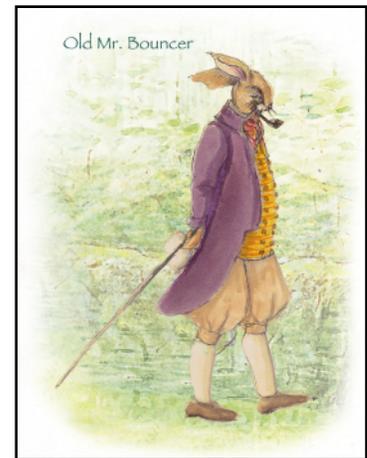
ABOUT THE TALES

The Tale of Peter Rabbit

The Tale of Peter Rabbit, published in 1902, was Beatrix Potter's first book and it became an instant classic. It's the story of Peter; a naughty rabbit-child who disobeys his mother's warning and goes into Mr. McGregor's garden. Peter stuffs himself on vegetables and is almost caught by Mr. McGregor. During the chase he loses his coat and shoes but manages to escape under the garden gate. When Peter returns home, ill and exhausted, his mother puts him to bed with chamomile tea.

The Tale of Benjamin Bunny

The Tale of Benjamin Bunny was published in 1904, and picks up where Peter's story ended. Peter's cousin, Benjamin Bunny, convinces Peter to return to Mr. McGregor's garden to retrieve his coat and shoes – Benjamin saw the McGregor's drive away in their wagon. Peter reluctantly agrees to accompany Benjamin back to the garden. The cousins find Peter's coat on a scarecrow and linger to pick vegetables to take home. But just as they're about to leave they run into the garden cat and hide under a basket. Old Mr. Bouncer comes to save the day and fights with the cat, locking it in the greenhouse. He scolds the bunnies and sends them home.



The Tale of Mr. Tod

The Tale of Mr. Tod was published in 1912. The story features two "disagreeable people", Mr. Tod, the fox and Tommy Brock, the badger. In this tale, Peter, Benjamin and Flopsy are grown up and Benjamin and Flopsy have children of their own. When Tommy Brock steals Flopsy and Benjamin's babies, Benjamin and Peter go off to rescue them. Tommy Brock doesn't have a house of his own, so he decides to settle in Mr. Tod's house to cook a baby bunny pie. Peter and Benjamin follow his tracks to the fox's house, but they aren't able to get inside. They decide to dig a tunnel under the house, when suddenly Mr. Tod appears. Mr. Tod tries to get the badger out of his house and they begin to fight and chase each other into the woods. Peter and Benjamin are able to rescue the baby bunnies and bring them back home.

There are a number of other beloved Beatrix Potter characters that we've introduced into our play: Squirrel Nutkin (from *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*, published 1903) and Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle (from *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle*, published 1905) both of these animals help Peter and Benjamin as they search for the baby bunnies. Jeremy Fisher, Jemima Puddle-Duck, Sally Henny-Penny, Pigging Bland and Timmy Tiptoes will also make a brief appearance when they collect their laundry from Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle.



All set and costume renderings/images are copyrighted by C. David Russell, ETC's Production Designer, unless otherwise noted.

ABOUT OUR ART FORMS

Enchantment Theatre Company is a non-profit arts organization resident in Philadelphia. For more than 30 years, we have been guided by our mission: *to create original theater for young audiences and families that inspires, challenges and enriches our audience, on stage and in the classroom.* All of ETC's productions are original adaptations of new and classic stories, myths, fairy tales and legends, combined with original or classical music. Drawing on great theatrical traditions from around the world—from the Bunraku theater of Japan, to the shadow puppets of Indonesia, from commedia dell'arte to physical theatre based on the pedagogy of Jewel Walker—we weave these elements together in compelling productions of beauty and inspiration. Our approach to epic storytelling blends physical and ensemble based theater traditions with masked actors, magic and illusions, puppets, and music resulting in a captivating theatrical experience that encourages children to explore the depths of their imaginations.

Enchantment's work is completely original. This includes the entire production, from the development of the script to the music that is written just for the piece. We create evocative rather than realistic interpretations of stories, with the goal of reaching deep into the heart and soul of our young audiences. Our work goes well beyond entertainment; it is designed to inspire, challenge and uplift children. Our unique style of performance captures, inspires and sparks children's imaginations and is accessible to all children regardless of language barriers. We bring stories to life in a way that inspires children to use their imaginations, to think using inductive reasoning and inference, to explore the story from different perspectives, and to connect to their own experiences; ultimately, making the story personal and memorable. We incorporate:

Dance/Movement

"the body says what words cannot"

-Martha Graham

Magic

fills our mind with wonder and awe

Music

speaks directly to the human heart

Masks & Puppetry

tap into our imaginations and allow us to play in creative worlds

WHY CLASSIC STORIES, MYTHS, FAIRY TALES AND LEGENDS?

Enchantment believes in the intrinsic value of classic stories, myths, fables and fairy tales in the development of children. These classic and magical tales are not only filled with promise – the weak can become strong, the poor can become rich, the unimaginable becomes possible – they provide children with possibilities of how to be in life. And most importantly, they invite children into new worlds to discover meaning for themselves. Stories, myths, fables and fairy tales are essential because they:

- Show kids how to handle problems
- Build emotional resiliency
- Give us a common language (cultural literacy & canon)
- Cross cultural boundaries
- Teach dramatic structure of a story
- Develop a child's imagination
- Give parents/teachers opportunities to teach critical thinking skills
- Teach lessons
- Support new National Common Core Standards

Visit our

EnchantmentTheatre.org/north-american-tours/discover page to learn more!

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The work of Enchantment Theatre Company is transformational. We are committed to creating theatre pieces that shift the very nature and substance of both audience and performers. Our devices are as old as the theatre itself—older in fact. Masks, puppets, music and illusion are the mystical tradecraft of pre-historic shamans and priests who could heal the body and soul. These workers of magic became the actors of ancient Greece whose purpose was to unfold the nature of being a human being with a wildly diverse audience—citizen, slave, rich and poor discovered the essence of their humanity in the company of one another in numbers sometimes reaching 30,000 souls. We of Enchantment Theatre Company are the heirs to this great work. Our mission is to engage the imagination and spirit of the audience until a transformation occurs and the true grace of our mutual humanity is revealed—not one time but *each and every* time that we perform. This is a mighty task!



Co-artistic Directors and Founders, Landis and Jennifer Smith with Ronnie Fairweather - Creative Director, Brands and Licensing - at Penguin Books Ltd in London, England

Although many of our Enchantment Theatre productions are fable-based, the extraordinary catalogue of children's literature has been a remarkable treasure chest filled with tales that are particularly well suited to our mission. In that regard, no author (and illustrator) is more valuable than Beatrix Potter and her remarkable creation, Peter Rabbit. Our Peter is the "reluctant hero" and in that regard, we can all identify with him as he carries us along on his journey of startling self-discovery and transformation. Although he is terrified, Peter finds that he must answer the call of Benjamin Bunny and by doing so he must confront his own past and, in a sense, re-invent himself. On his journey, he finds strength where there was weakness, courage where there was fear and compassion where there was indifference. Peter's saga of physical and spiritual transformation reaches deep into the center of those issues that are so perplexing for children around the world. Children wonder: how can they make their world a better and safer place to play in? As Peter wrestles with that question, and discovers his true place in his family and little community, the universal struggle over faithfulness, courage and love is brought into bold relief. He and his comrades help us all see ourselves with greater clarity and freedom. This is the essence of the work of Enchantment Theatre. Let your imagination work as you join us on the magical journey of *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*.

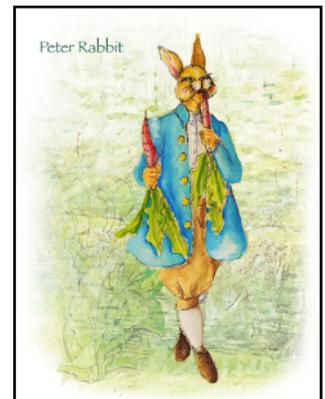


C. David Russell, ETC's Production Designer, looking at original artwork in the Beatrix Potter Archives at the Victoria and Albert Museum

Leslie Reidel, Resident Director



Original Peter Rabbit drawing courtesy of the Beatrix Potter Archives at the Victoria and Albert Museum



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