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The Neverland Project

By

STEPHEN GREGG

Dramatic Publishing Company

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The Neverland Project was first produced by Olathe South High School (Olathe, Kan.) on Oct. 24, 2024.

CAST:

WENDY DARLINGHana Obaideen
PETER PAN.....Noah Hastings
HOOK Cole Witt
SMEE Hayden Boyington
A.T.O.P.....Aidan Nixon
JOHN DARLING.....Lucas MacNider
MICHAEL DARLINGReece Johnson
MRS. DARLING..... Addisyn Posch
MR. DARLING Jonas Gipson
SLIGHTLYChristian Steger
NIBSChiron Crabb
MISS.....Aly Arenholz
THE SADDEST WOMAN
IN THE WORLD.....Emilia Huerta Torres
TINKER BELL.....Alicen Silva
LIZA Zoey Starke
NANA..... Niko Sichter
WILLIAM CROWN/NIGHTBraeden Mitchell
PAIGE LAMOTT/NIGHT Izzie Gladney
AUBREY LENCH/NIGHT Zachary Rathman
SOPHIE WARNICK/NIGHT Angie Rivera
SPERRY WHISHAM/NIGHT Wesley Tillotson
TRANSLATOR Ethan Drake
NEVER BIRD Indera Davis
CONSTABLE TURNER/NIGHTCamille Kamseu
MERMAID Linette Ndungu
JANE/NIGHT Megan Mahoney
JANE/AUBREY LEACH/NIGHT..... Milly Colgan
ARNOLD MEEKS/NIGHT.....Tucker Sowles

PRODUCTION:

Director David Tate Hastings
Technical Director..... Skyler Smith
Costumer Stacy Hatton
Hair and Makeup..... John Hollan
Lighting Designer Jarret Bertoncin
Sound Sean Rathman

To Jessica Goldapple and Ben Bodé,
two Lab Twenty6 actors who, for almost 20 years,
have helped shape every play I've written.

The Neverland Project

CHARACTERS

WENDY DARLING

JOHN DARLING: The middle child.

MICHAEL DARLING: The youngest child.

MRS. DARLING

MR. DARLING

LIZA: The maid.

NANA: The dog.

PETER PAN

TINKER BELL

HOOK

SMEE

A.T.O.P.: “All the Other Pirates.”

NIBS: A lost one.

SLIGHTLY: A lost one.

MISS: A lost one.

THE SADDEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD

MERMAID

NIGHT 1-3: More or fewer is fine.

NEVER BIRD

TRANSLATOR: For Nana.

JANE: Wendy’s daughter.

LONDONERS:

CONSTABLE TURNER

COLIN WHISHAM

WILLA/WILLIAM MEEKS

M.C. CROWN

THE FLIGHT:

SURPRISED PLANT: In the audience.

THRILLED/AMUSED PLANT: In the audience.

SCARED PLANT: In the audience.

THE ISLAND (V.O.): Calm, warm, like a beacon.

FLIGHT NOTE: After the first production of *Peter Pan* in 1904, the playwright, J. M. Barrie, had to address a problem:

“I had to add something to the play at the request of parents (who thus showed that they thought me the responsible person) about no one being able to fly until the fairy dust had been blown on him; so many children having gone home and tried it from their beds and needed surgical attention.”

Flight has always been essential to *Peter Pan*, which was the first full-length play ever to incorporate it. As amazing as the world of Neverland is—pirates and fairies and mermaids—it was the theatricality of the flight that tipped it into worldwide hit-dom. The flight was what people talked about or, in the case of parents, hid from their children so as not to spoil the surprise.

Flight is easy to imagine. It's the superpower we can come closest to achieving on our own; a trampoline will do the trick. In 1905, young audiences flew along with the Darlings, gasped when invisible wires swept them into the air. *The Neverland Project* doesn't require wires, just blindfolds—a little help keeping young eyes (make that all eyes) closed. That doesn't mean that the Neverland travel can't use a little help of its own. In the original Olathe South High School production, crew members walked down the aisles holding huge box fans. It was fun to watch the blindfolded audience react to the wind in their faces. Try it in your production or not. Just don't forget the fairy dust, which keeps everybody safe.

The Neverland Project

(As they enter the theatre, all patrons are handed blindfolds. Perhaps the blindfolds are labeled “Flight Goggles.”)

The ushers sprinkle each audience member with an invisible but potent substance—fairy dust. They announce what it is as they do so.

AT RISE: The set is plain or nonexistent. We might have the disappointing feeling that we’re about to watch Reader’s Theatre.

WENDY DARLING enters, speaks to the audience.)

WENDY. Welcome. My almost complete name is Wendy Angela Moira Darling. You’ve heard the name, of course, because you’ve read the book about me and my brothers, about Peter and all the rest. *Most* of the rest.

That book is fiction. It’s full of lies, falsehoods, and mendacities and it will soon be forgotten. The only thing I like about that book is that it’s divided into chapters, which keeps it tidy.

The writer of that book changed scenes, altered details and left out an important character. But the main difference between his version and my version—the real version—is that he wasn’t there. I’ll be telling the story as it actually happened—

JOHN *(entering)*. With help from me.

WENDY. Yes, with help from my brother.

JOHN. I’m John, the least interesting person in the book. He didn’t understand my dry sense of humor. The only thing anyone remembers about me is my top hat. But for

our version, I did all the interviews, including one with the Saddest Woman in the World.

WENDY. Did that happen? I thought she refused.

JOHN. I broke into her house. She was too sad to run away.

WENDY. John!

JOHN. Wait till you hear what she told me.

WENDY. Prologue: Moonlight.

(The LONDONERS—CONSTABLE TURNER, COLIN WHISHAM, WILLA [or WILLIAM] MEEKS and M.C. CROWN—enter.)

CONSTABLE TURNER. If it hadn't been a full moon, I don't think we would have gotten so many reports. But it was. And we did.

COLIN WHISHAM *(cranky)*. I was the first to see them.

WILLA MEEKS. I spotted them at 9:16 p.m.

M.C. CROWN. I'm the one they didn't believe.

COLIN WHISHAM. Moonlight annoys me. I had gone to close the curtains. But as I pulled them closed ...

WILLA MEEKS. As I looked up ...

M.C. CROWN. The moon so bright I had to squint.

COLIN WHISHAM. There was something in the sky ...

WILLA MEEKS. Against the disk.

M.C. CROWN. Four things, like geese ...

COLIN WHISHAM. *Kind* of like geese, but they were wearing dressing gowns.

M.C. CROWN. I ran for my telescope.

WILLA MEEKS. They were coming toward us, so they were actually getting bigger, from like this *(Fingers almost touching.)* to more like this. *(Fingers barely farther apart.)*

M.C. CROWN. Four of them, but not alike ...

WILLA MEEKS. Three of them were dog paddling, flailing,
but the other one ...

COLIN WHISHAM. But the fourth ...

CONSTABLE TURNER. The abductor.

COLIN WHISHAM. The fourth was different.

M.C. CROWN. It zipped up and down, did circles around the
others ...

WILLA MEEKS. Flew faster and faster.

COLIN WHISHAM (*hands behind the head*). It was flying
like this.

M.C. CROWN. Something green. And laughing.

(The LONDONERS exit.)

WENDY (*to the audience*). Chapter One: How Nana Got in
Trouble.

JOHN (*to MRS. DARLING, who has entered*). Can you state
your name, please?

MRS. DARLING. You know who I am.

JOHN. It's for a project.

MRS. DARLING. Mrs. George Darling.

JOHN. Mother, when was the first time you became aware of
Peter Pan?

MRS. DARLING. I first heard of Peter when I was tidying up
your minds.

JOHN. Do all mothers do that?

MRS. DARLING. All the good ones, yes.

JOHN. What does that consist of, exactly?

MRS. DARLING. It is quite like tidying up drawers. You
rummage in their minds and put things straight for next

morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. You linger humorously over some of the contents, wondering where on earth they had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to your cheek as if it were nice as a kitten and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. It's why, when you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on.

JOHN. And in which of our minds did you encounter Peter Pan?

MRS. DARLING. Quite surprisingly—all of them. In yours and in Wendy's and everywhere in Michael's.

But that wasn't the strangest thing. When I came across him in your minds I realized that I'd met him too, a long time ago. But that didn't make any sense. He'd be all grown up by now.

(MR. DARLING, MICHAEL DARLING and NANA enter. All five Darlings sit at the dinner table. NANA's curled up on the floor.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont'd*). John, you're not eating your turnips.

JOHN. I don't like turnips.

MR. DARLING. There was talk at the bank. Another lost child. In South Kensington.

MRS. DARLING. I heard that. Terrible.

MR. DARLING. Careless, if you ask me. Losing a child. Although I do sometimes lose track of the two of you.

MICHAEL. There are three of us.

MRS. DARLING. The lost ones are babies who fell out of their prams. And did you hear the name?

MR. DARLING. I don't remember.

MRS. DARLING. Clarinda Duncan. A girl. It used to be that all the lost children were boys because girls were too smart to fall out of their carriages. You know what this means?

JOHN. Girls are getting dumber.

MRS. DARLING. Yes.

MICHAEL. I've been telling you that.

JOHN. Wendy was standing close to Colin Dear all free period.

MRS. DARLING. Is that right?

MR. DARLING. How close?

JOHN (*arms all the way apart*). This close. (*Arms mostly apart.*) And then this close. (*Halfway apart.*) And then this close. (*Pretty close.*) And then this close ...

MRS. DARLING. What were you doing standing so close to Colin Dear?

WENDY. Trying to learn to like boys.

MR. DARLING. Wendy.

WENDY. I feel like I'm running out of time.

MRS. DARLING. Did it work?

WENDY. No.

MRS. DARLING. What did Colin think about this?

WENDY. He didn't notice. That's why I kept getting closer. If I don't teach myself to like boys, it's going to be difficult to be a mother.

MR. DARLING. We're going to change the topic. Somebody tell me something interesting about their day.

WENDY. I saw a boy fly past my window last night.

MR. DARLING. That doesn't count as a change of topic.

MICHAEL. Was it Colin Dear?

WENDY. No.

MRS. DARLING. Wendy, your imagination runs away with you.

(LIZA, the maid, has entered and is clearing the table. She jostles something.)

LIZA. Excuse me.

MR. DARLING. Liza's gotten so clumsy lately. We might need to find a replacement.

MRS. DARLING. George, not in front of her.

MR. DARLING. She can't hear me. I've asked her to tune out my voice.

MRS. DARLING. I think Liza works very hard for a ten-year-old.

MR. DARLING. You know, I'm starting to feel that this house is too big.

MRS. DARLING. You mentioned that yesterday.

MR. DARLING. I get lost.

MICHAEL. Is that why you don't tuck us in?

MR. DARLING. I do tuck you in. After you're asleep.

JOHN. I like it better before.

MR. DARLING. That's what mothers are for.

MRS. DARLING. Oh is *that* what mothers are for?

MICHAEL. Sometimes, when you don't tuck us in, I get scared.

MRS. DARLING. Sweetheart, there's no reason to be scared.

MR. DARLING. I'll tuck you in tonight if I can find your room.

MRS. DARLING. Not tonight. We're going to the Radcliffe's for dinner.

MR. DARLING. Ohhhhhh ...

MICHAEL. Don't go.

MRS. DARLING. It's just down the street.

MICHAEL. Who'll tuck us in?

MRS. DARLING. Nana will take care of you.

(A short series of barks from NANA that mean “Yes, I will.”

We hear a fast-moving buzz, like a determined fly. MRS. DARLING sees something out of the corner of her eye.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont’d*). What was that?

MR. DARLING. What was what?

MRS. DARLING (*unsettled*). Like a dragonfly.

MR. DARLING. Too late in the year.

MRS. DARLING. I saw something. Winged and tiny and ...

MR. DARLING. And what?

MRS. DARLING. Something that shouldn’t be here.

(Now both MRS. DARLING and NANA dart their heads as they see it again.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont’d*). There!

(NANA barks like crazy!)

MRS. DARLING (*cont’d*). Nana saw it too.

MR. DARLING. There’s nothing there.

(NANA has run out of the room.)

MRS. DARLING. George, let’s stay home tonight.

MR. DARLING. We’re going three doors down.

LIZA (*to the audience*). The only clue that something bad was about to happen was the leaves in the nursery. The missus was annoyed about it. She said “Liza, why didn’t you clean up the leaves under the window like I asked you?” And I had. This was on the third floor, above the trees.

MRS. DARLING (*to the audience*). I think everything would have been all right except for the incident with Nana. We'd heard a yell.

(We hear PETER PAN scream in pain.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont'd*). After the yell, there was a shout. Words. But I couldn't make them out.

PETER PAN (*offstage*). She bit off my shadow!

(NANA enters with something black hanging from her mouth. She's still eating it.)

MR. DARLING. Nana, what do you have there?

(NANA turns her head.)

MR. DARLING (*cont'd*). Drop it. Drop it, Nana. DROP IT!

(But she will not.)

MR. DARLING (*cont'd*). Give it to me. GIVE IT. GIIIVE IT!

MRS. DARLING (*to her husband*). What is it?

MR. DARLING. I don't know. It's black and slippery.

(NANA opens her mouth wide. All swallowed.)

MR. DARLING (*cont'd*). Oh, why do dogs eat disgusting things?

BAD DOG! You're not staying with the children tonight.

MRS. DARLING. George, she loves it so.

MR. DARLING. Too bad. (*To NANA.*) You're in the dog house.

(NANA's and MRS. DARLING's eyes snap to the same place.)

MRS. DARLING. I saw it again! She did too.

MR. DARLING. You're imagining things. Goodnight, children.

JOHN. But why can't Nana sleep in the room like always?

MRS. DARLING. Don't worry. I'm turning on the night lights.
Nothing can hurt you while they're on.

(The lights dim, and the night lights come on.)

JOHN. What if they go out?

MRS. DARLING. They never go out. They are the eyes a mother leaves behind to guard her children. Goodnight, children.

(MR. and MRS. DARLING exit.)

WENDY *(to the audience)*. Chapter Two: The Darlings Get a Visitor.

(The children lie down. Then ...

We hear a BUZZ. Then, one by one, we hear a pop of glass as the night lights go out.)

WENDY sits up hard, like she's been stung by a bee. What was that?

Aah! This time at the back of the neck. PETER PAN enters through a window.)

PETER PAN. Tink, stop that.

WENDY. Who are you?

PETER PAN. Come with me.

WENDY. No.

PETER PAN. You have to come quick!

WENDY. I don't know you.

PETER PAN. I know you. That's good enough where I come from.

WENDY. Where do you come from?

PETER PAN. We need you there right now.

WENDY. I can't leave my brothers.

PETER PAN. What could happen?

WENDY. A strange boy could come into the nursery and try to tempt them to their doom.

PETER PAN. I'm not a strange boy. I'm Peter Pan.

WENDY. Peter Pan. I feel like I've heard that name. But under no circumstances am I leaving this house with a stranger.

PETER PAN. We'll see about that.

WENDY. Under no circumstances.

(The LONDONERS pop back in.)

COLIN WHISHAM. The thing about Peter Pan—he's not what you call a pleasant boy.

WILLA MEEKS. He's not nice at all.

M.C. CROWN. Bossy.

COLIN WHISHAM. And vain. He actually crows. As in *crows*.
(A demonstration of the crow.) How many times would you have to hear that before you thought, "I need a different flying friend."

M.C. CROWN. But there was one thing about him.

WILLA MEEKS. I couldn't put my finger on it at first.

COLIN WHISHAM. Peter still has all his baby teeth. And the effect, when you talk to him—

WILLA MEEKS. Like a very persuasive kitten ...

COLIN WHISHAM. It's not just that Peter Pan doesn't want to grow up, it's that when you see him you think, "I don't want him to either."

WILLA MEEKS. I want to squeeze his little cheeks.

M.C. CROWN. I talked with him once and I found myself instinctively raising the pitch of my voice.

(The LONDONERS exit.)

PETER PAN. I'll leave then. I just need my shadow. Your dog took it.

WENDY *(uh-oh)*. What did it look like?

PETER PAN. Like a shadow. Black.

WENDY. And sort of slippery.

PETER PAN. Yes.

WENDY. Oh. I'm afraid Nana ate it.

PETER PAN. No!

(He starts to sob.)

WENDY. Oh, Peter. I still see your shadow.

PETER PAN. That's not my shadow. That's an ordinary London shadow. My shadow could jump across the room and fight.

WENDY. I'm sorry.

PETER PAN. So now will you come with me?

WENDY. I shouldn't. I can give you a kiss if you like.

PETER PAN. A kissssss.

(He holds out his hand.)

WENDY. A kiss. Surely you know what a kiss is.

PETER PAN. I know everything. Hand me a kiss.

(So as not to hurt his feelings, she hands him a thimble.)

PETER PAN. It's been a while since I've been given one of these. A kiss goes on your thumb, yes?

WENDY. That's right.

(He puts it on his thumb.)