

*The "Tail" of Peter Rabbit
A Musical*



Rob Roznowski

Music and Lyrics by Chelle Peterson
Inspired by "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" by Beatrix Potter

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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P.O. Box 1401
Rapid City, SD 57709

The "Tail" of Peter Rabbit

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The Tail of Peter Rabbit was originally produced at Michigan State University's Summer Circle Theatre on June 12, 2015: Deric McNish, director; Sarah Ackerman, stage manager; and Elspeth Williams, production design.

PETER: Ryan Duda

FLOPSY/MOPSY/COTTON-TAIL/CAT: Katie Noyes

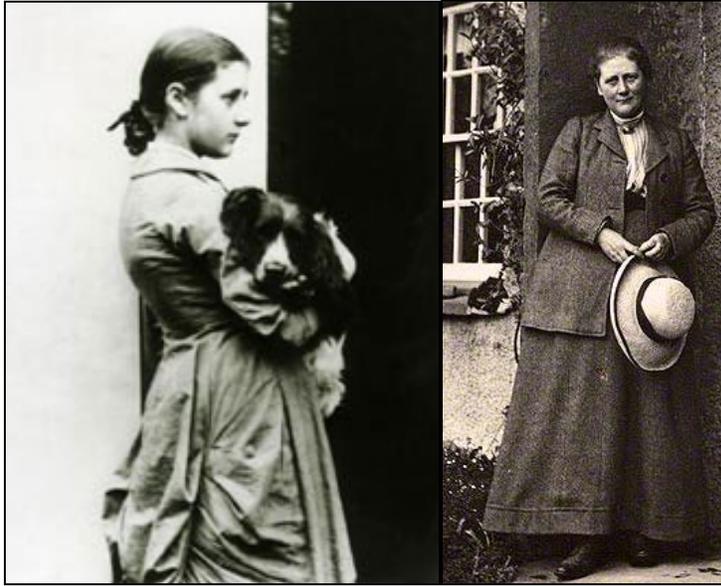
MOTHER/SPARROWS/MOUSE: Jacqueline Wheeler

MCGREGOR/BENJAMIN BUNNY: Lee Cleaveland

The "Tail" of Peter Rabbit

INTERACTIVE MUSICAL/YOUNG AUDIENCES. Adapted from the children's story by Beatrix Potter. Peter Rabbit's mother warns him to never venture into Farmer McGregor's vegetable garden since Peter's father was caught by Farmer McGregor and made into a pie. But instead of picking berries with his sisters, the adventurous Peter raids Farmer McGregor's garden and gorges himself on vegetables. Soon Farmer McGregor spots Peter and chases him out of the garden. Peter escapes but finds that he is now lost and tangled in gooseberry netting. Peter must find a way to free himself from the netting and find his way home but not before he encounters some sparrows, a mouse, and even a conniving cat! Young audiences will love this charming musical with its comical characters and five original songs. Perfect for touring!

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.



Helen Beatrix Potter, 15 years old, with her dog Spot. Potter as an adult.

About the Story

English author and illustrator Helen Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) wrote 30 books during her literary career and is best known for her children's stories featuring animals. As a child, Potter kept several pets including mice, rabbits, cats, guinea pigs, and dogs. She also spent much of her time studying the flora and fauna of the Scottish countryside and of the Lake Country area of England. The *Tale of Peter Rabbit* was published in 1902 and is based on a story Potter included in a letter to her former governess's ill son Noel. Potter married lawyer William Heelis in 1913 when she was 47 years old and the couple never had children. An avid conservationist and sheep breeder, Potter purchased several farms in Lake Country, which she bequeathed to the National Trust and are now part of the Lake District National Park.

Characters

(3 M, 4 F, 5 flexible)

(With doubling: 2 M, 2 F)

PETER: Mischievous, disobedient rabbit who yearns for adventure; wears a blue tweed jacket with brass buttons and bright wingtip shoes; male.

FLOPSY: Peter's sister; wears Victorian clothing and a red cape; female.

MOPSY: Peter's sister; wears Victorian clothing and a red cape; female.

COTTON-TAIL: Peter's bookish, shy sister; wears Victorian clothing and glasses; female.

MOTHER: Peter's mother who warns Peter not to venture into Farmer McGregor's garden; wears Victorian clothing; female.

FARMER MCGREGOR: Scottish farmer who hates it when rabbits eat his vegetables; speaks with a Scottish accent; male.

SPARROWS 1-3: Sparrows who help free Peter from gooseberry netting; they speak very rapidly; flexible.

MOUSE: Mouse who won't help Peter; speaks with a cockney accent; flexible.

BENJAMIN BUNNY: Peter's cousin; cannot pronounce his "R" or "L's"; male.

CAT: Farmer McGregor's laconic cat; stretches out her "S's" except when crossed; flexible.

Note: Rabbits have fuzzy rabbit tails. The original Potter Illustrations should inspire all design elements.

Options for Doubling

FLOPSY/MOPSY/COTTON-TAIL/CAT (female)

MOTHER/SPARROWS/MOUSE (female)

MCGREGOR/BENJAMIN BUNNY (male)

Setting

1890, England. Peter rabbit's home and Mr. McGregor's garden.

Set

There is a large Victorian toy theatre backdrop with rows of ripe vegetables, a row of water for a stream, a row of trees for the lane, etc. Between each row is a space where puppets pop up.

Songs

Music: "Lunch for Rabbits"

Music: "Lunch for Rabbits" reprise

Song: "The Ballad of Mr. Rabbit" (Mother)

Song: "Rules Minuet" (Flopsy, Mopsy, Peter, Cotton-tail)

Music: Cartoon Sequence

Music: Rabbit Chase

Song: "Peter's Adventure" (Peter)

Music: Bird Chase

Song: "McGregor's Rules" (Farmer McGregor)

Music: "Scritch, Scratch, Scritch"

Music: Hero Cue

Music: Exit Cue

Music: Foiled Cue

Song: "Medley of Rules" (Mother, Peter, Farmer McGregor,
Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail)

Props

Rabbit's foot keychain with keys
3 Red capes, for Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail
Umbrella
String of vegetables that includes lettuce, beans, radishes, and
a cucumber
Large pumpkin
Garden rake
Garden hoe
Berry netting
Puppet of Farmer McGregor
Puppet of Peter
Puppet of Mother
Puppet of Flopsy
Puppet of Mopsy
Puppet of Cotton-tail
Puppet of a scarecrow wearing Peter's clothes
Butterfly net
Sign that reads, "Keep Out!"

*"Nothing is more frust-eratin'
After planting vittles,
Than having rodents harvest them
With their little tiny nibbles."*

—Farmer McGregor

The "Tail" of Peter Rabbit

(AT RISE: *There is a large Victorian toy theatre backdrop with rows of ripe vegetables, a row of water for a stream, a row of trees for the lane etc. Between each row is a space where actors or stick puppets may pop up at certain moments. Entrance music: "Lunch for Rabbits." As music begins, Peter, Mother, Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail, and Farmer McGregor enter and greet the audience.*)

MOTHER: *(To audience.)* This is "The Tale of Peter Rabbit."

ALL: *(To audience, except Peter.)* "The Tale of Peter Rabbit."

MOTHER: *(To audience.)* And we are the characters that will inhabit the story. I am Peter's mother. And this is my son, Peter.

(Peter shakes his hindquarters and points to his tail.)

PETER: *This is the tail of Peter Rabbit! (Continues to shake tail.)*

MOTHER: Peter, stop that immediately!

PETER: But I can't, Mother, it is such an exciting
taaaaaaiiiillllll!

MOTHER: *(To audience.)* My son Peter seems to hop to his own drummer. He rarely listens to me.

PETER: *(Still shaking tail.)* Tail!

FLOPSY: Peter, how unseemly!

MOPSY: Peter, how uncouth!

PETER: *(Shaking his tail. To audience.)* These are my sisters.
(Introducing.) Flopsy...

FLOPSY: *(To audience.)* Present. *(Bows.)*

PETER: *(To audience, introducing.)* And Mopsy...

MOPSY: *(To audience.)* And accounted for. *(Bows.)*

PETER: *(Stops shaking tail. To audience.)* My family: Mother, Flopsy, and Mopsy.

MOTHER: Don't forget Cotton-tail.

FLOPSY/MOPSY/PETER: *(Reluctantly.)* Oh, yes, Cotton-tail...

(Cotton-tail emerges from between Flopsy and Mopsy. Note: In the original production, Flopsy and Mopsy were two hand puppets operated by the actor playing Cotton-tail.)

COTTON-TAIL: *(Shyly.)* Hello, audience.

(Flopsy crowds in front of Cotton-tail.)

FLOPSY: That is quite enough, Cotton-tail. Right, Mopsy?

(Mopsy crowds in front of Cotton-tail.)

MOPSY: Yes, Flopsy.

COTTON-TAIL: Sorry.

(Cotton-tail is terribly shy and recedes into the background behind her pushy sisters.)

MOTHER: *(To audience.)* There is one other lead character in our tale.

PETER: *(Shaking tail, shouts.)* Tail!

(Farmer McGregor enters.)

MCGREGOR: No doubt, you're talking about me. *(To audience, introducing.)* I'm Farmer McGregor.

FLOPSY: *(To audience.)* He's the villain.

MOPSY: *(To audience.)* Indubitably the villain.

COTTON-TAIL: *(Emerging.)* I wouldn't necessarily call him a villain. He's rather a multi-faceted character.

FLOPSY: *(Annoyed.)* Did you hear something, Mopsy?

MOPSY: *(Annoyed.)* I heard nothing.

COTTON-TAIL: *(Receding.)* Apologies.

MCGREGOR: *(To audience.)* I'm just a farmer doing his job, making rules to keep his vegetables safe from rodents. That's my part in this tale.

PETER: *(Shaking tail.)* Tail!

MOTHER: Peter, enough shaking. You know better. *(To audience.)* This is the story of how rules were created to protect my family.

PETER: No, Mother. This is the story of how I break all of the rules and become a hero.

FLOPSY: This is our story of how rules keep society civil.

MOPSY: Quite right, Sister.

COTTON-TAIL: I thought it was a more complicated examination of how rules—

FLOPSY: Cotton-tail, the rule is only speak when spoken to.

MOPSY: *(To Cotton-tail.)* That is the rule dear, so shhh.

COTTON-TAIL: *(Stage whisper.)* Sorry.

MOTHER: *(To audience.)* Along the way, you shall meet several others that complete our tale.

PETER: *(Shouts.)* Tai—! *(Mother holds Peter before he can shake his tail. To audience.)* But we're the main ones you need to know to understand the story.

ALL: "The Tale of Peter Rabbit."

("Lunch for Rabbits" reprise. As the music plays, Peter and his family get into place. McGregor exits.)

PETER: Mother, I'm ever so hungry!

MOTHER: Well, then, I shall go to the market.

PETER: But, Mother, no need to go to the market. *(For the following, Peter mimes the action while his mother looks on and is not amused.)* I could just as easily make my way out of this fir tree, crawl on my belly along the roots through the sand, which would give me just enough cover to speed down the lane to slip through the tiny hole in the fence, where I would inch past the wall, ford the stream, cross the field, and

endeavor to champion some vegetables home for us all to munch on. I could be a hero.

MOTHER: Peter, that is too dangerous.

PETER: Danger is my best chum, Mother!

MOTHER: No! While I am gone, you may go into the field or down the lane, but you must not put one paw in Farmer McGregor's garden.

FLOPSY: Certainly, Mother.

MOPSY: Duly noted, Mother.

FLOPSY/MOPSY: Field. Lane. But not Farmer McGregor's garden.

MOTHER: Did you hear me, Peter?

PETER: *(Sullenly.)* Something about wanting me to get vegetables from the garden...?

MOTHER: Peter!

PETER: I heard you, Mother, but I don't understand why not.

FLOPSY: You mustn't disobey Mother.

MOPSY: *(To Peter.)* She knows best.

(Cotton-tail emerges.)

COTTON-TAIL: Perhaps you could all reach a compromise. *(Pause. They just stare at her.)* Then this story would come to a swifter conclusion.

MOTHER: *(Annoyed.)* If we did that, we would skip the moral and ruin our audience's chance to learn a lesson from this tale.

PETER: *(Shaking tail.)* Tail!

COTTON-TAIL: Sorry, Mother.

MOTHER: Back to our story.

PETER: But, Mother, you never let me have any fun. Why can't I have adventures in the garden?

[END OF FREEVIEW]