

# PETER AND THE WOLF AND OTHER MUSICAL TALES

Review Round-up

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<https://wsmumstreet.wordpress.com/2015/01/30/peter-and-the-wolf-at-tobacco-factory-theatre/>

## Peter and the Wolf at Tobacco Factory Theatre

Posted on January 30, 2015



Image by Peter Stevenson, with thanks

*Peter and the Wolf* is a well-known and much-loved children's story by Sergei Prokofiev, who composed both its narrative and easily recognisable music.

It's tale about of a brave young Russian boy called Peter, who against his grandfather's wishes, not only approaches the big bad wolf lurking in the forest beyond the peaceful meadow but, with his friend the blackbird, contrives a plot to ensnare him. The composition was written by Prokofiev in under a week and the key is in its simplicity, with each character given his own identifiable score, allowing even the youngest of children to follow the plot with ease.

The Little Wolf Gang theatre group's version of *Peter and the Wolf* is scaled down, with a cast of four players: Fiona Barrow on violin; Edward Jay on accordion; David Adams on bassoon and storytelling by Martin Maudsley, each performer being as crucial to the whole as the next. The

teamwork in this production is solid and every cast member is keenly aware of with the others, maintaining a fluidity and playfulness that is beyond impressive.

*Peter and the Wolf* is bookmarked by two shorter Russian folkloric tales. The one about a fiddler and the devil is a face-paced whirl of a story, in which the musical chemistry between Barrow and Jay is palpable. The other, named Bear-lero, is about a woodcutter whose insatiable appetite for greatness leaves him unstuck. Set to the music of Ravel's Bolero, the moral is understood and the music entrancing.

Martin Maudsley storytelling is upbeat and fun, his diction clear and his voice completely audible, even above the booming and powerful sound of our reduced orchestra. Adams adds to the visuals, injecting a playful menace into the production, particularly when he uses his bassoon as a hunter's gun. Jay's musical arrangement is spot-on, perfect for this younger generation, and my eight year old and I both enjoyed both listening to and watching the heartfelt spectacle in the auditorium of the Tobacco Factory.

*Peter and the Wolf and other wild musical tales* is recommended for those aged 6+, though there were younger children in the audience and, really, don't feel that you can't go without children as adults will love this as much as the kids. In a word ... beautiful.

**Stage Talk Magazine**

<http://stagetalkmagazine.com/?p=6423>

## LITTLE WOLF GANG at the Tobacco Factory, Bristol



In just under an hour the four members of *Little Wolf Gang* give vivid and lively accounts of three musical folk tales from Russia. The show opens with *A Daring Fiddler Meets a Devilish Stranger at the Crossroads*, a supernatural story that gives violinist Fiona Barrow plenty of opportunity to display her expressive and idiomatic skills, ably supported by Eddy Jay on accordion. Narrator Martin Maudsley revels in the devilish details, and makes it clear that audience participation is expected.

The fourth member of the gang is bassoonist David Adams, who joins the other three for the centerpiece of the show, *Peter and The Wolf*. Prokofiev created this wonderfully tuneful 'children's symphony' in just four days, and in its original form the music is of course provided

by an orchestra. Such is its popularity that an extraordinary variety of celebrities have been recorded tackling the story-telling, including Sophia Loren, David Bowie and Mikhail Gorbachev. This 'chamber' performance may be lacking in sumptuous orchestral colour, but it has an appealing intimacy and a sense of fun that will certainly engage younger members of the audience. I particularly enjoyed the way that David Adams plays the bassoon as though he actually *is* Peter's grandfather, grumpily muttering away to himself about his brave but reckless grandson. In an inventive and amusing departure from the original he and Martin Maudsley present the hunters as a rather self-satisfied vocal duet. The tale comes to a rousing conclusion when Peter triumphantly marches the captured wolf off to St Peterburg's zoo, while we are invited to ponder the fate of the duck, still quacking inside it.

The final short piece is *A Foolish Woodcutter Discovers a Magical Wishing Tree*, a morality tale that warns of the dreadful ursine fate that can befall those who wish for too much. The accompanying music is certainly not Russian, but as the alternative title for the story is *Bear-lero* you will know that it is very familiar indeed. Its repeating melody and inexorable crescendo are employed to great effect as the greedy woodcutter blindly heads towards his doom.

All four performers are very talented and they know how to entertain young people without patronizing them. They deserved a much larger audience than they had on the opening night, but they were rewarded with warm and well-merited applause at the end. Great fun.

Mike Whitton 29/01/15

**Bristol 24-7**

<http://www.bristol247.com/channel/culture/theatre/reviews/review-peter-and-the-wolf-tobacco-factory-bristol>

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Toby O'Connor Morse, January 30, 2015



Prokofiev's classic tale of a small boy who takes on a wolf with the aid of his friend the bird is one of the essential landmarks of any fully-rounded childhood. Most of us encounter it in recorded form, with narrators ranging from Peter Ustinov to Bono, since performances are all too rare.

However, Little Wolf Gang – a small band of strolling players – offer Bristolian children (and their parents) a chance to experience the work live, albeit in a stripped down version. The symphony orchestra is replaced here by just three instruments: violin (Fiona Barrow), accordion (Eddy Jay) and bassoon (David Adams, who also provides the voice of Peter's grumpy Grandfather). This tiny ensemble provide the musical accompaniment to **Martin Maudsley's** engaging and vivid narration of the tale – waddling like a duck one minute, twisting to represent a gnarled old willow tree the next, Maudsley fills in the picture outlined by Prokofiev's music.

Bookending this musical main course are two other Russian folk tales set to music. The disconcerting *The Fiddler meets a Devilish Stranger* allows Barrow's violin full rein to plunge into a carefree circus of polkas and mazurkas. The outcome of *A Foolish Woodcutter Discovers a Magical Wishing Tree*, meanwhile, can be guessed from the title: foolish people granted wishes rarely come off well in fairy stories. With the rolling repetition of a classic storyteller, Maudsley is gripping as he tells the story to the backing of Ravel's Bolero.

Little Wolf Gang's show is a pleasant introduction to some classics, both spoken and musical. It may not be utterly engaging for the very young, but I know at least one nine-year old who hummed Peter's theme all the way home.

***Peter and the Wolf*** continues at the Tobacco Factory Theatre until Saturday, January 31. For more info and to book tickets, visit [www.tobaccofactorytheatres.com/shows/detail/peter-and-the-wolf-and-other-wild-musical-tales](http://www.tobaccofactorytheatres.com/shows/detail/peter-and-the-wolf-and-other-wild-musical-tales)

#### The Post

<http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Peter-Wolf-Bristol-8217-s-Tobacco-Factory/story-25923461-detail/story.html>

## Peter and The Wolf at Bristol's Tobacco Factory Theatres

By [The Bristol Post](#) | Posted: January 26, 2015



A brand new interpretation of Prokofiev's Peter and The Wolf is heading to Tobacco Factory Theatres. **Natalie Banyard** meets the talented team of musicians and the storyteller behind the project

Leave the January gloom behind and step into the enchanting world of Peter And The Wolf And Other Wild Musical Tales; a vibrant storytelling and musical delight for adults and children alike. Accomplished storyteller Martin Maudsley comes together with virtuoso musicians Eddy Jay (accordion), David Adams (bassoon) and Fiona Barrow (violin) in a brand-new interpretation of a musical masterpiece that sparkles with imagination and panache.

Their Peter And The Wolf translates the enduring brilliance of Prokofiev's original score into a thrilling medley of live classical music and spellbinding storytelling, producing a performance to enchant theatre-goers of all ages and introduce a new generation to this gem of musical characterisation.

Audiences will be captivated by the story of clever Peter and the ravenous Wolf, who is stalking the forest in search of a tasty dinner. But the ingenious little boy has a plan to elude capture. Full to the brim with quirky characters, Peter And The Wolf is a tale of courage and compassion, animated by Prokofiev's instantly recognisable music.

This much-loved centrepiece is complemented by two other tuneful tales, captured from the woods of Russia, both interweaving spoken word with specially arranged live music.

During the show, the musicians also playfully introduce their instruments and styles, encouraging the audience to feel part of the characters' unfolding stories.

The talented musicians are Bristol's Eddy Jay and Fiona Barrow, who regularly perform together internationally as an accordion and duo and recently completed a sell-out national tour of Piaf – The Songs to rave reviews. They have also both performed with the acclaimed Kneehigh Theatre Company.

David Adams has played bassoon around the world and is a member of Bristol Ensemble, as well as recently creating his own musical play, Dimitri & Uncle Joe.

They are joined by professional storyteller Martin Maudsley, known in these parts as the founder and artistic director of Bristol Storytelling Festival and for telling tales in theatres, festivals and schools across the UK.

Martin says: "After taking our musical- storytelling version of Peter And The Wolf to packed theatres around the UK last year, including a sell-out show at Cheltenham Literature Festival, we're delighted to bring it home to Bristol and especially to Tobacco Factory Theatres, where we all really enjoy performing.

"The seed of an idea for us to do Peter And The Wolf was planted in Bristol two years ago by fiddle-playing Fiona's 12-year-old daughter, so we hope she enjoys seeing and listening to the fruition of that idea into a fully-fledged performance on stage."

Thursday, January 29, to Saturday, January 31. Tobacco Factory Theatre, Raleigh Rd, Bristol, 7.30pm, mat Sat 2.30pm, £9.

**Primary Times**

<http://www.primarytimes.net/avon/news/2015/01/review-peter-and-the-wolf-tobacco-factory-theatre-bristol-until-sat-31-jan-15>

## REVIEW Peter and The Wolf, Tobacco Factory Theatre, Bristol, Until Sat 31 Jan 15

While puppetry, mime and straightforward drama are familiar to most theatre goers, musical storytelling is an unusual format which requires a different response from the audience. So, when a talented foursome calling themselves The Little Wolf Gang show up with this beautiful adaptation of Peter and the Wolf by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev, we don't know at first whether to sit politely and enjoy the music or join in with the hand-clapping and catcalling. The boyishly charismatic storyteller Martin Maudsley cajoles us and eventually we respond, identifying the animals' characters with instrument sounds and stomping our feet along to the bouncier bits.

Prokofiev created Peter and the Wolf specifically to enchant children and the bright yet haunting theme that represents Peter himself has lost none of its potency in spite of regular revisits over the decades by everyone from Walt Disney to David Bowie. Maudsley delicately explores every nuance and emotion in the dilemma faced by the cat, the bird and Peter as they're threatened by the archetypal wolf, while the musicians each bring their own charm to the performance. Violinist Fiona Barrow is inspirational and cheeky, accordionist Edward Jay is dry as a long-abandoned wolf bone and "grandfather" bassoonist David Adams quietly absurd. This Peter and the Wolf is a delightful way of introducing children to live music and a lot of fun for the grown-ups, too. **(Mike Gartside)**