



Disney and Cameron Mackintosh's

MARY POPPINS

A Musical based on the stories of
P.L. Travers and the Walt Disney Film

original music and lyrics by

RICHARD M. SHERMAN and ROBERT B. SHERMAN

book by JULIAN FELLOWES

the rep

ARKANSAS REPERTORY THEATRE

MAR 6 - APR 12, 2015 | TICKETS ONLINE AT THEREP.ORG

Study Guide, March 2015

Prepared by Robert Neblett

INTRODUCTION

Step in Time! Step in Time!

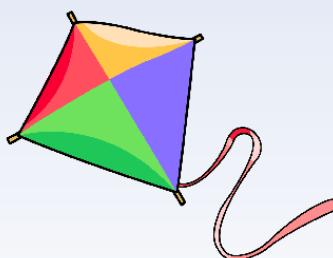
In 2014, the Disney musical film *Mary Poppins* celebrated its 50th anniversary of delighting audiences of all ages. But you may not know that 2014 was the same year that the “Practically Perfect” character of Mary Poppins celebrated her 80th birthday; the first *Mary Poppins* novel appeared in 1934.

Whether you are familiar with the books of P. L. Travers or only know the magical nanny through Julie Andrews’ Oscar-winning performance, you will discover something new and exciting in this magical musical from Disney Theatricals and Cameron Mackintosh, the producer of *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon* and *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Mary Poppins will set your spirit soaring up through the atmosphere, up where the air is clear, as you visit (or revisit) the Banks family of Number Seventeen Cherry Tree Lane and watch the prim and proper nanny with a heart of gold and a magic wink in her eye set things to rights in this topsy-turvy household.

Whether you hum along to “Jolly Holiday” or reach for a tissue during “Feed the Birds” or discover new musical theatre standouts like “Anything Can Happen,” *Mary Poppins* will touch your heart.

And of course, whether you can say it backwards or not, we know that you will have a Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious time at *Mary Poppins*!



SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

Bert, a jack-of-all-trades, introduces us to the Banks family of Cherry Tree Lane (Prologue). The Banks children, Jane and Michael, terrorize their governess Katie Nanna while chasing a kite through the park and she resigns, leaving the house in a panic (Cherry Tree Lane). The children present their parents with their own advertisement for Nanna's replacement (The Perfect Nanny), which their father George rips up and throws into the fireplace. As he tries to leave the house to go to work at a local bank, George is confronted by Mary Poppins, who magically appears and informs him that she has answered the advertisement that he had previously destroyed. Confused and frazzled, he leaves the hiring process in the hands of his wife Winifred. Mary Poppins accompanies the children to the nursery and, with her magical tape measure, sums up their characters, while declaring herself Practically Perfect in Every Way.

Mary Poppins and the children go on an outing to the park, where they meet Bert, who is painting. They take a magical journey into the colorful painting of the park he has created (Jolly Holiday). The statues come to life and sing and dance with them. They return home to find Mr. and Mrs. Banks arguing about hiring Mary Poppins. Mrs. Banks reflects about her role as wife and mother (Being Mrs. Banks) as the children reminisce about their magical day with their new nanny.

The children try to help their mother prepare for a tea party she is hosting, but they and Robertson Ay, a clumsy young servant, practically destroy the kitchen when attempting to ice a cake. Mary Poppins and the children clean the mess (A Spoonful of Sugar), but Mrs. Banks is disappointed to discover that none of her guests have chosen to attend the party.

Mary Poppins and the children visit Mr. Banks at the bank (Precision and Order/A Man Has Dreams). While they are there, Mr. Banks is visited by two businessmen seeking loans. He turns down Mr. Von Hussler's requests and grants Mr. Northbrook's. On their way home, Mary Poppins introduces the children to the Bird Woman of St. Paul's Cathedral and teaches them a lesson in charity (Feed the Birds). Mary Poppins and Bert then take the children to visit the magical sweets shop operated by the ancient Mrs. Corry and her two daughters, Annie and Fannie (Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious).

Back at Cherry Tree Lane, Mr. and Mrs. Banks are arguing because George fears he may lose his job, based on refusing Mr. Von Hussler's loan; Van Tussle has made a fortune overnight and the bank directors accuse him of losing a profit. Mary Poppins informs the Bankses that this is her night off. Jane and Michael fight over a toy and Mary Poppins brings the nursery toys to life to express their displeasure at the way the children have treated them through the years (Playing the Game). The children fall asleep, and Mary Poppins joins Bert on the rooftop (Chim-Chim-Cher-ee). She informs Bert that the wind has changed and flies away. The children and Mrs. Brill discover that Mary Poppins has gone.

Special Note: While the stage musical of Mary Poppins is based partly on the Disney film, it also contains additional elements that are derived directly from the fiction of P. L. Travers. Therefore, the theatrical version is not a direct transfer from screen to stage. It contains some new characters, stories, and songs and deletes some familiar ones as well.

ACT TWO

Mrs. Banks has hired Miss Andrew, George's cruel childhood nanny (also known as "The Holy Terror") as a replacement for Mary Poppins. When he sees her, Mr. Banks runs away in fear. Dismayed at Jane and Michael's behavior, Miss Andrew announces that the only solution is strict discipline and bad-tasting medicine (Brimstone and Treacle). Jane and Michael run away into the park and Bert tries to cheer them up with a kite (Let's Go Fly a Kite). The kite flies out of sight and they cannot pull it down from the sky. Mary Poppins descends the kite string.

Mrs. Banks worries about the children's disappearance and the state of her relationship with Mr. Banks (Being Mrs. Banks - Reprise). The children return to find the household under the tight control of Miss Andrew. Mary Poppins frees Caruso, Miss Andrew's lark, from his cage, and the two women engage in a battle of wills (Brimstone and Treacle - Reprise). A giant birdcage appears and traps Miss Andrew, flying away into the sky.

When Mr. and Mrs. Banks discover that Mary Poppins is back, Mr. Banks confesses to Mary Poppins that he may lose his job. She agrees to stay on, regardless of his ability to pay her. Mrs. Banks informs him that his job is not as important as their family.

In the nursery, the children express their desire that Mary Poppins stay as long as possible (Practically Perfect - Reprise). Michael is swept up the chimney, followed by Mary Poppins and Jane. They find Bert, covered in soot, on the rooftop and he introduces them to the life of the chimney sweeps (Step in Time).

George receives a summons to the bank, where he fears he will be fired. George admits it may be time to sell his mother's china vase, which is then broken in an accident. He discovers gingerbread stars from Mrs. Corry's shop, which he used to hide from Miss Andrew, among the shattered pieces. He blames Mary Poppins for the destruction of his life, and Bert encourages to look at his life in another way (A Man Has Dreams). The children, who have watched this encounter, say good-night to their father and give him the sixpence that Mr. Northbrook gave them at the bank. As the children return to bed, Mary Poppins leaves the kite where George can see it. He picks it up and leaves for the bank.

In the nursery, the children, Mrs. Banks and Mary Poppins question their future (Anything Can Happen). Mrs. Banks follows her husband and Mary Poppins flies away with the children over the rooftops of London. On his way to the bank, Mr. Banks gives the coins that Jane and Michael gave him to the Bird Woman. George learns that his actions actually saved the bank from Von Hussler's schemes and he is given a promotion, with Mrs. Banks at his side. Mary Poppins and the children take a magical tour of the stars (Anything Can Happen - Reprise).

Mary Poppins says good-bye to the children one last time and flies away. Mr. and Mrs. Banks return home from the bank and pledge to become a loving family that does not need Mary Poppins to keep them in line (Finale).



CHARACTERS

 **Mary Poppins:** A magical nanny who is prim, proper and practically perfect in every way.

 **Bert:** A Cockney jack-of-all-trades (chimney sweep, painter, lamplighter, busker) who has developed a special relationship with Mary Poppins.

 **Jane and Michael Banks:** Two young children who desperately need a nanny to show them the importance of proper behavior, discipline, compassion and the power of their imaginations.

 **George Banks:** Jane and Michael's father. A no-nonsense banker who has placed his career and financial status before his family's happiness.

 **Winifred Banks:** Jane and Michael's mother, a former actress. She is a dedicated wife and mother who has become trapped in a lifestyle of pretending to be something she is not by fitting in to "respectable" social circles.

 **Katie Nanna:** The Banks' nanny at the beginning of the play who is cross and unfriendly.

 **Mrs. Brill:** The Banks' cook and housekeeper. She is perpetually put-upon to pick up the slack when things go wrong around the house.

 **Robertson Ay:** The Banks' dimwitted, clumsy servant.

 **The Inhabitants of Cherry Tree Lane**

Admiral Boom: An old man with a tendency to express everything using nautical language.

Miss Lark: An old woman with a lap dog, Willoughby. She and Admiral Boom have a flirtatious relationship.

 **Park Keeper**

 **Policeman**

 **Statues in the Park**

 **Neleus:** A young man with a dolphin from Greek mythology.

 **Queen Victoria:** A statue of the former Queen of England.

 **Mrs. Corry:** Ageless woman who operates a magical candy store that sells gingerbread decorated with real stars from the sky.

 **Fannie and Annie:** Mrs. Corry's daughters.

 **Bird Woman:** A kind old woman who tends to the birds outside of St. Paul's Cathedral.

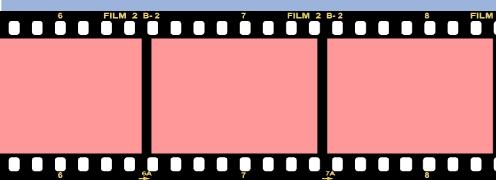
 **Bank Chairman:** Mr. Banks' supervisor at the bank.

 **Herr Von Hussler:** A businessman seeking a loan from Mr. Banks' department at the bank, whose business proposal is based on profits alone.

 **Mr. John Northbrook:** A businessman seeking a loan from Mr. Banks' department at the bank, whose business proposal is based on decent, hardworking men seeking a better life.

 **Miss Andrew:** The oldest, cruelest nanny in the world. Was Mr. Banks' nanny when he was a boy. Extremely fond of bad-tasting medicine as a punishment.





PRODUCTION HISTORY

THE FILM

The 1964 Disney film was not the first attempt to bring Mary Poppins to life onscreen. In 1949, an hour-long television special on CBS starred well-known character actress Mary Wickes ("White Christmas," "The Music Man," "Sister Act") as Mary Poppins and E. G. Marshall as Mr. Banks. Her stern portrayal of the character is much closer to the character in the books than that of Julie Andrews.

After 20 years of negotiations with author P. L. Travers, Walt Disney finally convinced her to grant him the rights to turn her books into a musical film in 1964. The film, with a score by the Sherman Brothers and starring Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke, went on to win numerous awards and become one of the most beloved Disney films of all time. Travers disagreed with many of Disney's choices in the final film and delayed production several times by threatening to revoke the rights.

Mary Poppins was nominated for 13 Academy Award in 1965 and won five, a record for any Disney film since. Julie Andrews won the Best Actress Oscar, "Chim Chim Cher-ee" won for Best Original Song and other wins included Best Film Editing, Best Visual Effects and Best Score.

In 1983, a Soviet musical miniseries based on the Travers books was created for Russian television entitled "Mary Poppins, Goodbye."

In 2004, a short animated film called "The Cat That Looked at a King" was created to accompany the 40th anniversary home video release of Mary Poppins. Set in the modern day and starring Julie Andrews in live action sequences, it features a journey into a chalk painting, like that in the 1964 film.

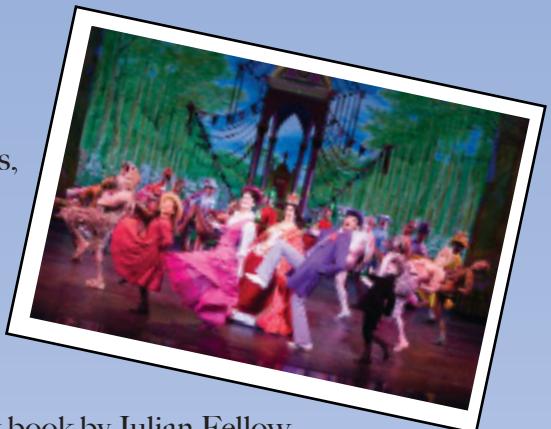


In 2013, a fictionalized film account of the tumultuous relationship between Walt Disney and P. L. Travers, entitled "Saving Mr. Banks," was released. It combines biographical accounts of Travers' early life in Australia with the story of the creation of the Mary Poppins film. The film starred Tom Hanks as Walt Disney and Emma Thompson as Travers.



THE STAGE MUSICAL

After years of offers to allow her to grant the rights for a stage musical version of *Mary Poppins*, in 1993 P. L. Travers met with super-producer Cameron Mackintosh (*Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*) to discuss the possibility of a new version for the theatre. She agreed to grant the rights, with the stipulations that all of the show's creators must be British, the script should be based more directly on her books and that any new music that was not in the Disney film not be composed by the Sherman Brothers.



In 2004, the London production had its world premiere, featuring a new book by Julian Fellowes ("Downton Abbey"), several songs from the 1964 film and new music and lyrics by George Stiles and Anthony Drewe. It was co-directed by acclaimed British director Richard Eyre and choreographer Matthew Bourne (best known for his revolutionary deconstructed ballet versions of *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* and *Carmen*).

The London production was nominated for nine and won two Olivier Awards (the British equivalent to the Tony Awards in America). Laura Michelle Kelley won for Best Actress in a Musical (as Mary Poppins), and Matthew Bourne and Stephen Mear won for Best Theatre Choreographer.

The musical opened on Broadway in November 2006 at the New Amsterdam Theatre and starred Ashley Brown as Mary Poppins and Gavin Lee as Bert. Lee had previously originated the role of Bert in the London production.

The Broadway production was nominated for seven Tony Awards in 2007 and won the Tony for Best Scenic Design (Bob Crowley). It was also nominated for six 2007 Drama Desk Awards, winning the awards for Best Actor in a Musical (Gavin Lee) and Best Scenic Design (Bob Crowley).

In 2009, the musical number "Temper Temper" was replaced by "Playing the Game," and all subsequent productions around the world use the latter song.

Also, in 2009, Laura Michelle Kelley took over the title role on Broadway at the same time that well-known American musical actor Christian Borle (*Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Smash*) took over the role of Bert.

The Broadway production closed in March 2013, becoming the 30th longest-running musical in Broadway history.



P. L. TRAVERS AND MARY POPPINS



Born Helen Lyndon Goff in 1899 in Australia, P. L. Travers (a pen name derived from the name of her late father Travers Goff) had a colorful life before ever being approached by Roy and Walt Disney to make a film version of her Mary Poppins books in the mid-1940s.

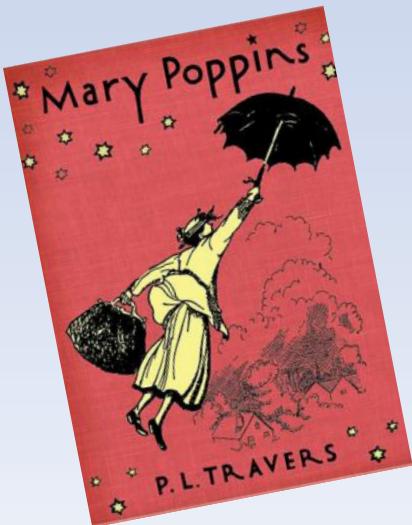
After her alcoholic father, a bank manager, died of tuberculosis in 1905, her mother and sisters moved to Bowral, New South Wales. While attending boarding school, she began writing poetry and pursued a career as an actress. After she moved to England in 1924, she assumed the pen name P. L. Travers and started creating the characters who would soon populate her children's books.

In her youth, she lived a colorful, globetrotting life. She studied poetry with the leaders of the new Irish national literature movement and even worked in the United States studying Native American mythology and folklore. She was also an avid follower of Zen Buddhism.

Upon the 1934 publication of *Mary Poppins*, Travers became an international success, following up the original volume with seven sequels over the next 50 years. While she wrote many other children's books and nonfiction works, none achieved the success that her *Mary Poppins* books did.

She had a number of brief romantic affairs through her life, including one with Irish literary giant George William Russell. In 1939, Travers adopted a son, Camillus Travers Hone, the biological grandson of a biographer of poet and playwright W. B. Yeats.

Beginning as early as 1938, Walt Disney pursued the rights for a film adaptation of Travers' *Mary Poppins* stories. She refused him for over 20 years, finally agreeing to meet with him and the film's collaborators in California in 1961 as a "consultant" on the film, largely because she was in danger of financial ruin. These encounters are dramatized in the 2013 film "Saving Mr. Banks."



Her main objections to the film version were that she felt Mary Poppins' character had been "softened" too much, she did not like the music composed by the Sherman Brothers for the film and was absolutely opposed to any use of animation in the telling of her story. Ultimately, Disney overrode her objections once he purchased the rights from her, claiming final cut privilege.

The tension between Travers and Disney was so strong by the time of the world premiere of the film that Disney did not even invite her to the event. She had to ask to be added to the guest list. She was supposedly so angered by the final version of the film that she wept openly during the screening. Even though the film secured her financial future and reinvigorated her fame for the rest of her life, she always regretted her decision to sell her beloved character to Disney. When asked for permission to create a sequel to Mary Poppins, she refused and would not change her mind.

Travers was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II in 1977 and died in 1996. But, Travers continued to write until the end of her life; the last two Mary Poppins novels were published in 1982 and 1988.

The character of Mary Poppins, as written by Travers, is often cold, intimidating, stubborn and unsympathetic. Her hardness is intended to cut through the nonsense attempted by the Banks children, in an attempt to civilize their uncouth ways. However, she does take the children on a number of magical adventures in which they are exposed to compassionate, open-hearted friends, relatives and associates of Mary Poppins, all of whom seem to be as ancient and timeless as she is. She denies any involvement with frivolity in the children's presence, but always acts in their best interests, protecting them from harm in the natural and supernatural worlds.



Mary Poppins' true identity is never disclosed, although there are intimations through the books that she may be a shooting star or a "fairy tale come true." She is referred to as "The Great Exception," meaning that she has retained the memory of being an infant and possesses special abilities that humans lose as they grow older, including being able to talk to animals. She also remembers the eternal world from which we are born into existence on Earth.

Fantasy author Neil Gaiman's 2004 short story "The Problem of Susan" not only attempts to redeem the character of Susan Pevensie from C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but he refers to an apocryphal, posthumous work by Travers in which Mary Poppins is revealed to have been Jesus' nanny.



DID
YOU KNOW?



THE DISNEY FILM

- 风筝 “Mary Poppins” was the first film the Walt Disney Company ever released on DVD format.
- 风筝 The word “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” was officially added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 1986.
- 风筝 Julie Andrews was left hanging in mid-air during one particularly long camera setup. The stagehands unwittingly lowered her wire harness rather rapidly. “Is she down yet?” called a grip. “You bloody well better believe she is!” fumed Andrews. [From www.tcm.com]
- 风筝 The opening shot of Mary Poppins sitting on a cloud contains a gag originally used in Disney’s “Dumbo.” While Poppins checks her makeup, her carpetbag slides “through” the cloud. She catches it repeatedly just before it falls to oblivion. The stork delivering Dumbo does the same thing with his bundle.
- 风筝 The child actors who play Jane and Michael were not told that Dick Van Dyke would also be playing Mr. Dawes, Sr., in the bank scenes.
- 风筝 Van Dyke suggested to Walt Disney that he double in the role of Mr. Dawes, Sr. He even offered to play the role for free. Disney made him audition for the role, and when Van Dyke was cast, also made him make a financial donation to the CalArts film school.
- 风筝 Julie Andrews was hesitant to accept the role of Mary Poppins, hoping that she would be asked to recreate her stage performance as Eliza Doolittle in the film adaptation of the musical “My Fair Lady,” which cast Audrey Hepburn as the Cockney flower girl instead. Andrews went on to win the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role as Mary Poppins in a year that saw the two films competing for Oscars.
- 风筝 Interestingly enough, though she was not asked to play Eliza Doolittle, her performance in Mary Poppins is what convinced the producers of “The Sound of Music” (1965) to cast her as Maria von Trapp, another singing governess (with decidedly fewer magic powers).

THE MARY POPPINS BOOKS



In the books, Jane and Michael have three additional siblings: the twins, John and Barbara, and youngest sister Annabel, who is born in the middle of the second book, "Mary Poppins Comes Back." While Jane and Michael are the primary characters in the books, the other children do accompany Mary Poppins on adventures as well.



The illustrator of the Mary Poppins books, Mary T. Shepard, was the daughter of E. H. Shepard, the famous illustrator of the "Winnie the Pooh" and "Wind in the Willows" books.

In 1981, the "Bad Tuesday" chapter of "Mary Poppins" was edited by Travers to alter some negative ethnic stereotypes that were deemed offensive in the latter 20th century. These characters were replaced by animals from around the world.



Emma Thompson, who stars as P. L. Travers in the 2013 film "Saving Mr. Banks," also appears as a magical, Mary Poppins-esque governess in the "Nanny McPhee" series of films, based upon the "Nurse Matilda" books by Christianna Brand.

Q&A WITH ELIZABETH DEROSA

We asked our very own Mary Poppins, Elizabeth DeRosa, to share her experiences in the role with Little Rock audiences. Here is what she had to say about preparing for her role, the importance of the story and the magic that Mary Poppins brings to all of our



Elizabeth DeRosa as Mary Poppins
Photo by John David Pittman

Q: How did you feel when you heard that you would be playing Mary Poppins in this production in Little Rock?

A: Well, I was excited, of course! I had heard lovely things about Arkansas Repertory Theatre. I couldn't wait to meet The Rep family and get started. Mary Poppins is an iconic, demanding, vocally challenging, thrilling and wonderful role! She is a confident and another worldly woman who will not be ignored. She commands respect. She is loved and feared. She is one of the greatest female roles ever written for musical theatre and I am honored to be introducing my version of this character to the Mid-South!

Q: This is a story about magic, the magic of the imagination, the magic of a kind gesture, the magic of dreams. Does that magic share anything in common with the magic of the live theatre?

A: I think this is a very personal question. For a woman who grew up loving theatre and great performances, the magic definitely translates for me. Then, I've always believed the theatre is a magical place. When I walk in, I am taken over by a sense of mystery, wonder and awe about what is happening, what could happen and what is about to happen!

 Q: How do you approach an iconic role like this, which many audience members may not only be familiar with but have a deep emotional attachment for, based on Julie Andrews' cinematic portrayal?

A: I think, as actors, we are always beginning with a fresh palate. If I have learned anything in my 10 years working professionally, its that when I do get cast, it is for being MYSELF playing a role, my purely unique version of it. I think this holds true whether a role is iconic or brand new. It is one thing to honor a legendary actor's portrayal and to layer that as a basis of who a character is, but if I simply parroted Julie Andrews' performance, I wouldn't come across as genuine and authentic, i.e., as Mary Poppins!

 Q: In the books by P. L. Travers, Mary Poppins can be described as more stern and aloof and less likable than the on-screen version presented by Julie Andrews. Does your portrayal of Mary Poppins borrow any of the original creation from the books?

A: I love P. L. Travers' books. I have read all of them multiple times. The woman and her books are absolutely one-of-a-kind! When Disney Theatricals and Cameron Mackintosh decided to create the stage version of the musical, P. L. Travers played a more vital role. This is why "Supercalifragilisticex-

pialidocious," the park in "Jolly Holiday," Miss Andrew, etc., are more closely matching the scenes/lessons from the books. Well, P. L. Travers changed the course of my life. So, I can tell you for this reason, with absolute certainty—not to mention she is brilliant—that my portrayal of Mary Poppins honors her creation, which is a British sensibility that can be lost in translation, if not approached delicately. That said, of course we have the Disney movie that everyone knows and loves. So, I am also very aware of what an audience is expecting and hoping to see! Lastly, I must also honor my director's vision and cannot wait to find out what Donna's is... then blend this all together for The Rep!

 Q: What would you say to prepare audience members for this production? Should they leave their expectations at the door, particularly since this is a live play and not a movie?

A: I think you answered this question in the question! Yes, come for what you love and what you want your family to experience—a live production of a kid friendly musical...not to see the movie. You won't see the movie, but your family will be thrilled by our storytelling. I can promise you that! Children need not be familiarized. Children will watch and listen and be mesmerized by this story. Adults will be amazed

at how closely they may identify with it! It is poignant and gripping for all ages.

 Q: How do you strive to become "practically perfect in every way," both onstage in this role and in your everyday life?

A: In my personal life, I am always striving to be a kind, honest, loving and generous person with a positive outlook. I am also a healthy and fit person. I honor my body, mind and spirit by eating healthily and exercising daily. I treasure my life and the people in it as the gifts that they are. I know how to have fun and when are the appropriate times to do so. On stage I listen, watch and do. I am laser-focused, knowing that we often have a limited amount of time to learn each section. I do my very best to immediately catch the choreography. Then I go home and drill it to perfection, so it is "in" my body. I always memorize exactly what the author wrote, never paraphrasing. I am kind to the children and cast as we work, but also serious and always lead by example.



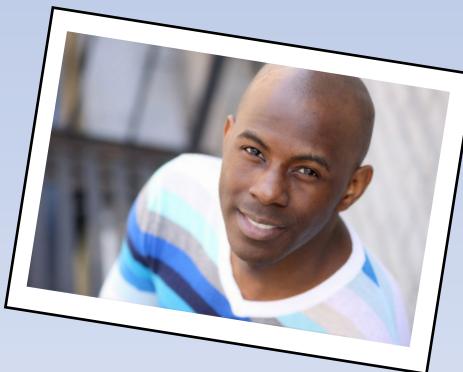
We asked the cast of Mary Poppins to reflect upon why this story, Disney's film and the title character are important to them. Here are some of their answers.

CAST REFLECTIONS



Corey West, Ensemble

I remember watching the film as a kid and thinking how great it was to really be able to use your imagination. It can take you anywhere you want to go! It was my first introduction to Musical Theatre. It was one of the movies that drove me to the conclusion that this is what I wanted to do as a career.



Elizabeth DeRosa, Mary Poppins

Disney's 'Mary Poppins' means childhood, keeping on the straight and narrow, respect and love for authority, trust in your elders, joy, delight, wonder and the magic of one's imagination. When I was a little girl, I fell in love with the film because it was real, not animated, and it was magical. There was truth I could grasp as well as just enough wonder for me to dream of more. As I grew into my teens I began to follow and admire Julie Andrews and fell in love with the film again, this time because of her ease and perfection in the role. I fell in love with the film a third time when I was auditioning for the Broadway show. This time it was because I identified so closely with Mary. I loved children and had been a nanny, who came and went and fell in love with families, many times! As an adult, well, what can I say? This incredible, heartfelt and moving story has literally changed the course of my life. It has impacted it such that I will never be the same in so many glorious ways.





Thomas Cooper, Admiral Boom/Chairman

I can't remember when I first saw 'Mary Poppins' as a child, but I do remember being enchanted by the animated characters interaction with live characters in the film. I also remember being touched by the song and message of "Feed the Birds," even though at that time I couldn't completely understand its full meaning. As an adult I have beautiful memories of my oldest son, now 25 years old, as a toddler dancing like a Hottentot on top of the couch to "Step in Time" with the rest of the chimney sweeps.

Michael Milkannin, Ensemble/Herr Von Hussler

'Mary Poppins' is a Disney classic and a childhood staple. It is a glimpse of whimsy in our world of chaotic reality. I don't remember when I first saw the film, but I do remember watching "A Spoonful of Sugar" as part of my Disney sing-along VHS. I always loved Julie Andrews being sassy to her reflection and singing to fake birds. I also remember the magic of Disney and how much influence they have to encourage creativity in children. That moment during "Let's Go Fly a Kite" of leaving your cares behind to be with the ones you love is something that has always spoken to me!



Monica Clark-Robinson, Bird Woman/Mrs. Brill

I'm feeling whimsical, so I decided to answer you with an acrostic poem:

Many nights, snuggled under blankets, eyes glued to the perfection of
Andrews, Dame Julie Andrews.
Really, need one say more?
Yearning to fly kites and jump into chalk pictures with her,
Perhaps even wanting to BE her.
Often, I would sing into a hairbrush at my dollar store mirror, imagining I was
Practically Perfect in Every Way.
People grow up, sadly, and brushes become just brushes.
I continued to sing, though--"Feed the Birds,"
Night after night to my sleepy-headed child
Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, indeed.



Chris Shin, Ensemble

Disney's 'Mary Poppins' means a lot to me. For some reason, anything Disney-related seemed "fancy" to me. It really was one of those movies that encouraged my wild childhood imagination. I loved that it didn't take place in America. In terms of lasting impact, I had a wild imagination as a child and liked to make up games. Seeing the movie definitely encouraged my imagination. To this day, I just loved seeing those chimney sweeps in "Step in Time" and the community that they are together.

BACKSTAGE AT THE REP WITH KEN GOLDSTEIN

 Q: What attracts you to a piece of theatre like Mary Poppins?

A: Simply, I love telling stories. The story of Mary and the children has always been interesting to me, but the story and evolution of Mr. Banks has always warmed my heart!

 Q: Where do you begin when you approach the design process for a show like Mary Poppins, especially when you have to confront the fact that audiences who grew up with the film have very specific expectations?

A: I always start with the text no matter what I am designing. In terms of preconceived notions or expectations that come with a piece like MP, or anything that is present in our culture, it becomes a bit more complicated. We will never recreate the movie...so while I try to respect the source material, I try to create a world where the audience is willing to put expectations aside...to hop on board with "our" Mary Poppins.

 Q: How do you balance your own creative vision with the influence of the source material?

A: I think what is important to nod is the direction of the source, but truly, I try to take a fresh look at the story, at the characters, the environment and the atmosphere of the world of the play, and serve that.

 Q: Did you use any specific visual resources in cre-

The scenic designer on a theatrical production is responsible for creating a three-dimensional representation of the world in which the characters live and the action of a play occurs. In the case of Mary Poppins, there are many specific challenges the script presents, not the least of which is creating an environment which must transform from the world of Edwardian London to the realm of the imagination in the blink of an eye. We asked Mary Poppins' scenic designer Ken Goldstein to reflect on his process in creating the set for the show.



ating the scenery for The Rep production?

A: I always do a lot of visual research—knowing the practical reality of our production, much of my research focused on the rhythm of Victorian and Edwardian city-scapes.

 Q: Did you create a design statement that guided you through the process of creating the scenery for Mary Poppins? What was it?

A: 'Design Statement' is too formal to reflect my process. When I work in my studio, and the foundation of what I teach my students as the through line of the design process is one central question: What are you trying to do? In this case, my answer is to create a space that while fundamentally serving the action of each scene, allows the atmosphere and characters of this story come to life on stage and in the imagination of the audience.

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING & DISCUSSION

- What are the pressures that drive Mr. Banks to behave the way he does to his family? Is he a sympathetic character?
- Watch the 1964 Disney film of Mary Poppins and compare it to the stage production. Are there scenes that you feel are more effective onstage than onscreen? Do the two versions have the same emotional impact? Why or why not? This is not a question to determine which version is better, but rather to examine their similarities and differences.
- Have you ever had a Mary Poppins in your life? Who was it? What impact did she (or he) have in making you who you are today? What would your life be like without that influence?
- On one hand, Mary Poppins is as no-nonsense and strict as Miss Andrew. On the other, she introduces the Banks children to a new, magical way of seeing the world. What lessons does she teach the Banks family as far as balancing these two aspects of life?
- What are your first impressions of each of the characters in Mary Poppins? How does they compare/contrast with your final impressions of them at the end of the play?

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ACTIVITIES

- Read P. L. Travers' original Mary Poppins and write a scene for the theatre based on one of the chapters in the book. Ask yourself how you would achieve the magic in the story in a practical, physical way onstage. How would you get people to fly or to float up to the ceiling or paste stars in the sky? Have some other students read your scene out loud. Discuss the challenges of writing this type of story for the theatre.
- Research life in Edwardian England and compare the everyday lives of the Banks family to what you read. In particular, pay attention to the role of the expansion of the British Empire under Queen Victoria and King Edward and look at the role Mr. Banks must play in supporting that expansion as a member of the financial class.
- Make a list of the various servants you might find in an Edwardian household in early 20th century London.
- Read Hard Times by Charles Dickens and compare this Victorian view of utilitarianism vs. imagination with the world Travers (and Disney) create in Mary Poppins. Do you see similar social struggles? Who suffers when life is reduced to simply performing a function as a cog in society's machine?
- Write a new chapter for a version of Mary Poppins that takes place in 2015. What challenges do the children she must protect face in the 21st century? Where does she find magic in the world of today?

ARKANSAS CURRICULUM
FRAMEWORK TAUGHT IN
STUDY GUIDE, ATTENDING
THE SHOW AND SHOW
DISCUSSION

DRAMATIC LITERATURE

DE.1.DL.5 Compare and contrast dramatic elements from differing time periods and cultures

CE.2.DL.1 Modernize an assigned scene, using dramatic elements appropriate for a contemporary audience

THEATRE

1.1.28 Exhibit comprehension of and sensitivity to cultural diversity through peer response.

1.1.29 Extrapolate empathy for the characters in the literature

1.1.40 Explain the functions and interrelated nature of scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and make-up in creating an environment appropriate for the drama.

2.1.36 Demonstrate listening, observing, focusing, and concentration skills.

2.1.51 Respond appropriately as an audience member.

3.1.13 Understand, interpret, and evaluate theatrical performances using basic theatre terminology

3.1.14 Compare and contrast emotional responses evoked by a variety of drama styles (e.g., love, sorrow, joy, pride)

3.1.16 Utilize ways drama affects and/or enhances the lives of people of various ages, cultures, and heritages

3.1.17 Identify and evaluate artistic merit of theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions.

3.1.20 Reflect on the consequences of a character's decisions and actions and relate dramatic problems to one's own life

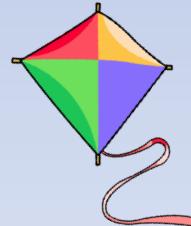
3.1.21 Determine and demonstrate appropriate aesthetic responses to dramatic performances



Founded in 1976 and enjoying its 39th season, Arkansas Repertory Theatre is the state's largest non-profit professional theatre company. A member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT D), The Rep has produced more than 280 productions including forty world premieres on its 385-seat Main-Stage and 99-seat black box Second Stage located in its historic Galloway building in downtown Little Rock. The Rep relies on season subscriptions, special events, foundation support, corporate and individual donations, Shakespeare in American Communities, The Shubert Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts and Arkansas Arts Council funding.



Arkansas Repertory Theatre exists to create a diverse body of theatrical work of the highest artistic standards. With a focus on dramatic storytelling that illuminates the human journey, The Rep entertains, engages and enriches local and regional audiences of all ages and backgrounds.



For questions or comments concerning this production of Mary Poppins or the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, contact our offices at (501) 378-0445. Additional information may also be found at www.therep.org. The Box Office may be reached at (501) 378-0405.



- Bank of America Foundation
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