

Sebastian Peake is the eldest of Mervyn Peake's and Maeve Gilmore's three children. For many years he worked in the wine trade but now spends much of his time giving illustrated talks on his father's life and work at literary festivals and other events. He is the author of a memoir, *A Child of Bliss*.

Alison Eldred ran the artists' agency Young Artists (now Arena) from 1976 to 2000 and continues to act as a consultant with the agency. She has considerable experience of working in the field of book illustration, especially in the areas of science fiction and children's books.

G. Peter Winnington has been researching Mervyn Peake's life and work for more than thirty years. He has edited periodicals on Peake and revised the texts of the Titus books for Penguin. His biography of Mervyn Peake, *Vast Alchemies: The Life and Work of Mervyn Peake*, was published by Peter Owen in 2000, and he has a critical study coming out shortly.

Praise for *Vast Alchemies: The Life and Work of Mervyn Peake* by G. Peter Winnington

'Peter Winnington could well know more about Peake than anyone else.' **Independent**

'Winnington is good not only as a biographer but as a critic on such matters as the physical rather than purely visual quality of Peake's imagination.' **Times Literary Supplement**

Also available from Peter Owen: *A Book of Nonsense* by Mervyn Peake

Front cover
Self-portrait by Mervyn Peake, Sark, 1933

IMAGE COURTESY OF GUERNSEY MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, THE STATES OF GUERNSEY, 2006

Back cover
The Three Spinners, taken from *Household Tales* by the Brothers Grimm

BOOK DESIGN BY BENEDICT RICHARDS

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'Mervyn Peake was not only a truly great writer and a truly great artist but was uniquely talented at weaving these two elements together. He does far more than add pictures to words: his illustrated works are flawlessly integrated works of art.' **China Miéville**

'Encountering the work of Mervyn Peake for the first time was a revelation; here were characters more grotesque and extraordinary than any I could imagine and yet so true to life and memorable that they felt like a distant branch of my own family. His vision is so persuasive that part of me is still wandering through Gormenghast castle, lost in a labyrinth of courtyards, dark passages and lofty attics – and the fact that he is equally brilliant and eloquent in words and line is truly remarkable.' **Alan Lee**

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'His writing is magnificent, moody, allusive . . . but never to be pinned down – always escaping the reader's grasp – eluding one's attempt to pin it down to anything as mundane as meaning. And yet . . . and yet . . . the power of the imagination is there . . . glowing like a will o' the wisp beckoning you on to follow.' **Terry Jones**

'Mervyn Peake's extraordinary zest for life was expressed in his comic drawings, nonsense verse, plays and his wonderful novel *Mr Pye*. His sense of humour informed even the darkest moments of his massive Titus trilogy, which is why those books are enduring masterpieces. In life, as well as his art, Peake's humour never deserted him.' **Michael Moorcock**

'Peake said of illustration "There must be above all things the power to slide into another man's soul." I think he succeeded in that, and I regard him as one of the greatest illustrators of modern times. The exciting froth of originality in the Gormenghast trilogy would be enough to remember an artist by, but there is more to be found in every wild and wonderful direction of his genius.' **Chris Beetles**

'At fifteen I consumed the Titus books in a single week and spent the next six weeks finding and devouring anything by or about Mervyn Peake I could lay my hands on – poetry, prose, plays, illustration, biography – before returning to the novels again and again.' **Joanne Harris**

Mervyn Peake The Man and His Art

COMPILED BY Sebastian Peake and Alison Eldred
EDITED BY G. Peter Winnington


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Mervyn Peake, best known as author of the three celebrated Titus books, was one of the most multi-talented artists of the twentieth century. Painter, novelist, author of children's books and nonsense verse, war artist, poet and dramatist, he also illustrated such classic works as *Treasure Island*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Ancient Mariner*, *Grimm's Household Tales* and *Bleak House*. A man of extraordinary vision and imagination, his literary and artistic creations are unforgettable, and his influence is felt to this day.

In this highly illustrated volume, his son Sebastian Peake has collaborated with Alison Eldred and G. Peter Winnington, author of an acclaimed biography of Mervyn Peake, to compile a stunning collection of illustrations, paintings, photographs, notebook pages and other material – much of which has never been published before – to produce a unique memoir of the artist's life and work. Contributors include the writers Michael Moorcock and Joanne Harris, Langdon Jones (editor of *Titus Alone*), artists John Howe and Chris Riddell, David Glass and John Constable, creators of the stage version of the Gormenghast trilogy, and Estelle Daniels, producer of the BBC television dramatization. The book includes sections on Peake's upbringing as the son of a missionary in China, marriage and fatherhood, experiences as a war artist, creation of the Titus novels, *Mr Pye* and other literary works, and his tragic decline as illness overcame him, resulting in his early death.

It is now sixty years on from the first publication of *Titus Groan*, one of the most sustained flights of imaginative writing of the twentieth century, and the time is ripe for a reassessment of the legacy of one of Britain's most original artists. This handsome volume is a must for art historians and all fans of Mervyn Peake's work.

Fully illustrated