William Lau , Walter P. Martishius

# Barbie (Series): Mermaidia / Fairytopia. Mermaidia

*Canada, United States of America (2006)*

TAGS: Delphic Oracle Metamorphosis Nereid(s) Nymphs Sea Nymphs Sirens

en.wikipedia.org (accessed: October 27, 2020).



| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Barbie (Series): Mermaidia / Fairytopia. Mermaidia |
| *Studio/Production Company* | Mainframe Entertainment, Mattel Entertainment |
| *Country of the First Edition* | Canada, United States of America |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | worldwide |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 2006 |
| *First Edition Details* | *Barbie: Mermaidia/Barbie Fairytopia: Mermaidia*. Directed by Walter P. Martishius, William Lau. Written by Elise Allen. Produced by Luke Carroll. Mainframe Entertainment, 2006, 85 min. |
| *Running time* | 85 min |
| *Format* | VHS, DVD |
| *Date of the First DVD or VHS* | March 14, 2006 (VHS, United States, Canada) |
| *Genre* | Animated films, Computer animation films |
| *Target Audience* | Children |
| *Author of the Entry* | Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl |
| *Peer-reviewer of the Entry* | Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com<br>Katarzyna Marciniak, University of Warsaw, kamar@al.uw.edu.pl |



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## Creators



### William Lau (Director)

William Lau is an experienced and award-winning director of films produced using Computer Generated Imagery animation and live-action, a writer and producer. He directed and co-directed many of the *Barbie* films for Mattel Entertainment (*Barbie as the Princess and the Pauper*, *Barbie: Fairytopia*, *Barbie: Mermaidia*, *Barbie: Magic of the Rainbow*, *Barbie in a Christmas Carol*, *Barbie and the Three Musketeers*, *Barbie: A Fashion Fairytale*, *Barbie: A Fairy Secret*, *Barbie in a Mermaid Tale 2*, *Barbie: Mariposa & the Fairy Princess*). He is also known for his work on some TV animations and action genre, like *Hot Wheels Highway 35World Race*, *The Messenger*, *Super Dinosaur* or *Max Steel* for Sony Pictures and Hasbro. He uses motion capture technology and creative keyframing techniques.

Sources:

barbie.fandom.com (accessed: October 27, 2020).

Author's blog (accessed: October 27, 2020).

Bio prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl



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**Walter P. Martishius , b. 1959**
**(Director)**

Walter P. Martishius was born on May 19, 1959, in Toledo, Ohio, USA. He is a production designer, art director, set designer, concept artist, illustrator, and matte painter, known for many productions. He has worked in the entertainment industry on live-action features, live-action commercials, combined live-action and CG television and feature animation. He now owns an independent design studio, *Martishius Designs* that can fulfill any design needs: a full production design of a project, concept art, visual development or a matte painting. Martishius was nominated for a 1990 Joseph Jefferson Award for Scenic Design for *Kiss of the Spider Woman* at the Pegasus Players Theatre in Chicago, Illinois. He was also nominated for an Emmy for his Production Design on the three-part mini-series *Dinotopia*.

Achievements:

- Film Set Designer: *Sleeping With The Enemy* (20th Century Fox), *Terminator II* (Carolco Pictures), *Patriot Games* (Paramount Pictures), *Sliver* (Paramount Pictures).
- Animation Director: *Barbie Fairytopia* (Mainframe Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie Fairytopia II Mermaidia* (Mainframe Entertainment/Mattel Feature).
- Art Director: *A River Runs Through It* (Columbia Pictures), *Super Mario Bros* (Buena Vista Pictures), *Wacky Races* 2D/3D Animated Series (Warner Bros Animation), *The House With A Clock In Its Walls* (Amblin Ent.), *Christmas Chronicles 2* (Netflix Feature Film).
- Commercial Production Design: Xerox, Nike, AT&T, Mazda, Air Touch, Cheerios, Hallmark, All Sport, Albertsons, Lynx Golf, M&M's, Doritos, Nestle.
- Production Designer: *Demolition Man* (Warner Bros), *The Next Karate Kid* (Columbia Pictures), *The Specialist* (Warner Bros), *Theodore Rex* (New Line Cinema), *Dinosaur* (Walt Disney Feature Animation), *The District* (Denise DiNovi Productions TV Pilot), *Dinotopia* (Hallmark Entertainment TV Mini-series), *Barbie In A Mermaids Tale* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie In A Fashion Fairytale* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie A Fairy Secret* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie Princess*



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*Charm School* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie A Perfect Christmas* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie A Princess And The Popstar* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie In The Pink Shoes* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Barbie Mariposa And The Fairy Princess* (Rainmaker Entertainment/Mattel Feature), *Tarzan And Jane* Season 2 Netflix Series.

- Visual Development/Concept Artist: *Shanghai Fortress* (Feature Film HS Entertainment Group).

Source:

Official website (accessed: October 27, 2020).

Bio prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl



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## Additional information

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| Casting | Voice actors:<br>Kelly Sheridan,<br>Chiara Zanni,<br>Kathleen Barr,<br>Lee Tockar,<br>Alessandro Juliani,<br>Christopher Gaze,<br>Tabitha St. Germain,<br>Andrea Libman,<br>Brittney Wilson,<br>Pam Hyatt,<br>Venus Terzo. |
| Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs | *Barbie Fairytopia* (film, 2005). |
| Summary | Being a sequel to *Fairytopia* (2005, Barbie™), *Mermaidia* is a story in which Barbie, as the fairy Elina travels to the realm of the mermaids to rescue her merman friend Nalu, who was kidnapped by the evil fairy Laverna. Laverna pressures Nalu to reveal the location of a special berry, by threatening that she would poison the waters of Mermaidia. With the help of Nori, a mermaid in love with Nalu, Elina tries to save Nalu before Laverna's servants retrieve the magical fruit allowing her to become the most powerful fairy. On their quest to find Nalu, Elina and Nori meet a lot of characters (the sea-snail Shellie, the oracle Delphine or the merfairies) and visit different places, such as the Mirror of the Mist in the Depths of Despair. After multiple |



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tribulations and adventures, Elina and Nori manage to save Nalu from Fungi, Laverna's servants, as well as to hide the berry and overthrow Laverna. To accomplish the mission, Elina temporarily transforms into a mermaid but is told to leave the water when the last pearl in her necklace begins to fade if she wants the transformation to be reversible. Unfortunately, when the time comes for her to transform back to a fairy, Laverna's servants drop a vile poison into the ocean. Elina manages to intercept the poison before it infects the water, but because she is under the surface when the last pearl fades, she will always have to remain a mermaid. However, Nori remembers a "reveal-one's-true-self" berry they came across during their mission, which, as Elina tastes it, turns her back to a fairy with wings even more beautiful than before, as a reward for her willingness to sacrifice them. Nori is reunited with Nalu, Elina returns to Fairytopia, and they all live happily ever after.

## Analysis

Although the plot of the film happens in a fairyland beyond time and space as we know them, the references to antiquity can still be found on several levels.

Firstly, the ocean in the film is populated by mythical creatures like mermaids, merfairies and mermen/tritons such as those mentioned by Pliny the Elder* or Physiologus** (2nd century AD), but the protagonists of *Barbie: Mermaidia* look quite differently. The underwater kingdom brings to mind the image of the underwater realm of Poseidon according to the tripartite separation of world powers between Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. Moreover, while in the underwater kingdom, the main heroine, Elina, undergoes a physical transformation, or metamorphosis, into a mermaid – she loses her fairy wings in exchange for a fishtail, which she needs to reach the Depths of Despair at the very bottom of Mermaidia. This theme of metamorphosis and the questioning of one's "true self" as a medium of expression resembles the extensive exploration of change as a concept in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. For example, Elina's reaction to becoming a mermaid has an almost tragic overtone similar to the degrading transformation of Perdix' son into a bird.

Another element straight from the classical tradition and used by the creators of the film is the motif of the Delphic oracle. As the two mermaids travel to rescue prince Nalu, Nori tells Elina that she is looking for the oracle, Delphine. The merfairies, who know where the



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oracle is, tell Elina to use the ferry guide to find Delphine. As Elina and Nori reach the ferry, it turns out to be run by a giant sea-snail. Eventually, the mermaids discover that the oracle is the snail itself. The oracle appears to be based on the image of the ancient one in Delphi – the name of the oracle, Delphine, is likely intended to be associated with the Oracle of Delphi. Moreover, it uses the same manner of response. Delphine does not directly tell them where to find Nalu, but rather that they must go through a trial of trust and sacrifices by going to the Depths of Despair and seeking out the Mirror of the Mist. Such an answer strongly resembles the non-directional character of Pythian prophecies, which tends to edify in a mysterious and ambiguous way.

Another connection to the ancient tradition is through the Latin language – an evil servant of Laverna is named Fungus Maximus, and his helpers, preserving the Latin form of plural – Fungi. This certainly evokes the Linnaean system of classification, yet is still rooted in Classical Antiquity. Being the sole instance of Latin language in the film, it suggests such a measure was used on purpose. Since the Fungi are to effect the poisoning of the ocean, should prince Nalu not cooperate, their name in Latin is fitting because fungi in the Roman civilization symbolized death by poison.

* Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, chapter IX .4. (5.) *The forms of the tritons and nereids. The forms of sea elephants*.

** Chapter XV *On the Siren and Onocentaur*.

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|---|---|
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Delphic Oracle Metamorphosis Nereid(s) Nymphs Sea Nymphs Sirens |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Friendship Heroism Humanity Love Sacrifice Water |



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Further Reading

Pakis, Valentine A., "Contextual Duplicity and Textual Variation: The Siren and Onocentaur in the Physiologus Tradition", *Mediaevistik. Internationale Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Mittelterforschung* 23 (2010): 115–186 (accessed: December 15, 2021).

Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, *IX. 4 (5)*, John Bostock, H.T. Riley, eds., London: Taylor and Francis, 1855. (accessed: December 15, 2021).

Addenda

**Translations:**

Dubbing available in the following languages: Albanian, Arabic, Brazilian Portuguese, Bulgarian, Castilian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese. (source: Barbie Fairytopia: Mermaidia | barbie-dubbing, accessed: October 27, 2020).



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