



Wand and cape



Top hat



# Dressing up should be child's play

FASHION DESIGNER **PEARL LOWE** GIVES NANCY CONNOLLY A SMALL PEEK AT HER PETITE CHILDREN'S WEAR COLLECTION



Leotard and butterfly



Pearl Lowe has launched a new range of children's wear called Petite, which will be sold in Harrods and is also available on her website. The clothes, all individually designed and made by local seamstresses, were inspired by the circus, something Pearl has always loved. She recently had a fashion shoot for the range at Babington House, a hotel and spa country club near Frome. "It was such an amazing day. We had lots of children. They were all playing around in the open air, dressing up, having fun. It really was something special," said a smiling Pearl. "With social media, laptops, iPads, phones and technology, children don't spend enough time just playing make-believe. "When I was young I used to love dressing up. We used to make up our own plays and play different characters, it was very imaginative. My children's clothes reflect this time past, when children used to dress up and play outdoors. "My children were always dressing up. That is how they were brought up. I love fancy dress myself. My son Alfie spent most of his young life in fancy dress. "The clothes in my new range are all made with



beautiful fabrics, and when the children grow out of them you can hang them on a lovely silk coat hanger and have them forever. They really are something special to be kept forever." Largely a luxury clothing and dress-up collection with extraordinary vintage-inspired costumes made using silk, colour, tulle and sequins, Petite is all about fun and adventure. All of the pieces are designed and produced in Britain. Designing is in Pearl's DNA. She said: "From as early as I can remember, I've always loved creating. As a child, I'd customise my own clothing for the thrill of knowing that I was wearing a one-off creation. By the age of 10 I'd already designed my first collection, which was sold in my mother's boutique in Covent Garden. I've never forgotten the amazing feeling I felt, seeing the clothes I'd designed, hanging there on the rails." Turning the Petite concept into a reality started with the purchase of a pink sequined fabric, which Pearl made into "cabaret curtains" for her 10-year-old Betty's room. They were lined with a beautiful silk, which provided Pearl with the instant inspiration for the collection. Further inspiration came from

circuses of the 1900s, and Cecil Beaton, the English fashion, portrait and war photographer who won an Academy Award for his stage and costume designs. "It's hard to find clothes for children that are a little bit different," said Pearl. "I'm quite flamboyant and so is my husband. I wish someone was designing sequined capes and harlequin leotards when my kids were younger. I love creating pieces that enable kids to create a magical fantasy world where their imaginations can run riot. "I love dressing up. I always wear dresses and heels and I love my make-up and lipstick. I belong to an era when women dressed up all the time, not just for going out somewhere special. "I always like to dress well. When I was on stage as a singer I made sure to wear beautiful clothes and make-up; that is what people want to see. I always had my heels, my lipstick and my black eyeliner. "I was definitely born in the wrong era. My favourite period is the 1930s when women really knew how to dress up. They didn't just turn up in jeans and dark clothes."