

Lewis Carroll's
ALICE IN WONDERLAND

*Adapted by
R. Rex Stephenson*

*Lyrics by
Lewis Carroll & R. Rex Stephenson*

Music by Jon Cohn and Emily Rose Tucker

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DEDICATION

To Nellie McCaslin and Joe Ray, whose creative abilities first brought this play to life, and especially to David Mitchell for his work accompanying both the original production and the revival fifteen years later. Thanks also to Kelly Caitlin Sullivan for typing. And always to my three girls, Janice, Jessica, and Juliet, who help me to see the magic in literature for young people.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Lewis Carroll, the author of "Alice in Wonderland," has been contracted by a theatrical producer, Sir Henry Irving, to adapt his book into a stage play. Carroll, multi-talented but totally disorganized, has put off the writing of the play until the day before it is due. To help him create it, he gets Alice Liddell and her friends and family to improvise all the delightful characters. Even his staid housekeeper, local handymen, and two of Carroll's university students end up playing the roles of the Queen of Hearts, the Caterpillar, and the March Hare and Dormouse. Humor and chaos reign as all these "actors," including Carroll himself taking on several roles, try to re-enact the important scenes from his book. Many lovely songs highlight the action such as "One Place On" when the characters change chairs at the tea party, and "The Royal March," in which the Queen and the young actors playing her children, soldiers and courtiers, enter the theatre. A real children's tea party is recommended between the acts of your own production.

The play runs about 90 minutes.

A NOTE FROM THE WRITER

Lewis Carroll's stories of "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass" have intrigued me for years, for they, like all great children's classics, can be enjoyed as much by the reader (parent) as by the listener (child). Thus, in this adaptation, I have tried to be faithful to both the spirit of Carroll's classics and, whenever possible, to his actual words. I chose to set the play in Carroll's study because he is, in many ways, as fascinating as any characters he ever created. A bachelor for life, he divided his time between teaching, writing mathematical textbooks, preaching (he was an ordained minister), taking pictures, and what he most enjoyed, inventing and telling stories to his friends' children. So what I am attempting to do in this play is to interweave biographical material about Carroll into two of his most famous stories.

This play was first produced at the Blue Ridge Dinner Theatre at Ferrum College in 1995. The production was directed by Nellie McCaslin and Joe Ray. In the fall of 1996 in a slightly revised form, it reopened at Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia. Sponsored by the Longwood Players, this production was directed by Pat Whitton and Rex Stephenson with Jon Cohn acting as Music Director. In 2009, the present version was produced by the Blue Ridge Dinner Theatre. Rex Stephenson directed, Emily Rose Tucker served as the musical director, and the set was designed by Jeff Dalton and Victoria Mallory Parker. This production was underwritten by the Nellie McCaslin Endowment.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(With doubling: 7 m, 12 w, 2 flexible, extras as desired.)

LEWIS CARROLL: (Charles Dodgson) Also plays the Duchess' Cook, the Mad Hatter, and the Herald.

ALICE

MISS O'MALLEY: Housekeeper. Also plays Queen of Hearts.

SIR HENRY IRVING: A theatrical producer.

LORINA: Sister of Alice. Also plays Upper Caterpillar and Diamond Gardener #2.

CHRISTINE: Sister of Alice. Also plays Diamond Gardener #7 and Executioner.

CHARLOTTE: Sister of Alice, also plays Cheshire Cat.

CONSTANCE: Sister of Alice, also plays White Rabbit.

JOHN: Brother of Alice, also plays Soldier 1.

MISS PRICKETT: Governess, also plays the Mouse and the Duchess.

WILLY: Friend of Alice, plays the Dodo and Soldier 2.

NANCY: Friend of Alice, plays Fish Footman.

GWENDOLYN: Sister of Alice.

CECILY: Sister of Alice.

HANDYMAN: Also plays the Lower Caterpillar.

HANDYMAN'S ASSISTANT: Plays a section of the Caterpillar and the Knave of Hearts.

COLLEGE STUDENT #1: Also plays the March Hare.

COLLEGE STUDENT #2: Also plays the Dormouse.

DODGSON'S FATHER: Also plays the King of Hearts.

DODGSON'S MOTHER

DODGSON'S GREAT AUNT

EXTRAS AS

GUESTS AT THE CROQUET GAME/TRIAL

DRUM MAJOR

ROYAL DRUMMER

CLUBS: Soldiers.

DIAMONDS: Courtiers.

HEARTS: Children of the King and Queen of Hearts.

TRAIN BEARER

SETTING

(See set design at end of script.)

Professor Dodgson's study is a pleasant Victorian-style room. The floor can be painted in a checkerboard pattern or several oriental rugs would suffice. Center stage we find a table long enough for two people to hide under and sturdy enough to support the weight of three people. This table is covered with a cloth, which hangs almost to the floor. On the table are preset teapot, cups, a sugar bowl and a small hand bell. There is a chair behind the table and a stool at each end. Stage right is a small table; on it are a number of books, including the red notebook in which Carroll writes his play. There are two stools at this table.

There are three entrances into the room. Stage right, a double archway leads to the outside door and to the rest of the house. Upstage right is a doorway covered by curtains, which leads to Dodgson's closet. The windows to the rear overlook the garden and also allow entrances and exits. The play also calls for the royal procession to enter through the auditorium and come up onstage. If this cannot be done, the window box could be omitted and patio doors at the rear could be utilized for this entrance. If this window is used, there is a window seat in front.

To the right of the window is a large bulletin board with a helter-skelter display of paper reminders. The stage right entrance is a one-step platform. In the stage left corner of the set is a large piece of sculpture that should look Grecian. If this is impossible to acquire, a hat rack can be substituted. There is a chair placed against the stage left wall. The walls may be dressed in Victorian fashion with prints and photographs. In the stage left corner, muslin strips are attached to the walls and painted the same color as the rest of the set so that they can be ripped off as wallpaper in the first act. There is also a bell-pull that "activates" the mirror-ball suspended above the set. The whole room should have a cozy, lived-in feel to it.

In the original production there was no orchestra pit, so the band was seated behind the set up left center. So that they could see and hear, a "blackboard" was in front of them. This was done with three layers of scrim, and then painted with some math equations. When the band played, lights were brought up so that the musicians were visible to the audience.

MUSICAL SYNOPSIS

(Please contact the publisher for scores and CD.)

ACT I

- # 1. Overture
- # 2. I Would Read (Alice, Lorina, Christine)
- # 3. Late Again (White Rabbit)
- # 4. Late Again - Reprise (White Rabbit)
- # 5. Poison (Lorina)
- # 6. Late Again - Reprise (White Rabbit)
- # 7. Water Ballet (Miss Prickett, Alice, Children)
- # 8. Fury and the Mouse (Mouse, Birds)
- # 9. Cheshire Cat (Alice, Duchess)
- #10. Lullaby (Duchess, All)
- #11. We're All Mad Here (Cat, Alice)
- #12. One Place On (Hatter, Hare, Dormouse, Alice)

ACT II

- #13. Ent'racte
- #14. Royal March (All)
- #15. Royal March - Reprise 1 (Queen, All)
- #16. Royal March - Reprise 2 (All)
- #17. Trial Song (Rabbit, Soldiers, Jury, All)
- #18. Swim Rabbit Blues (Hatter, All)
- #19. I Would Read - Reprise (All)

TIME and PLACE

TIME: The early 1870s.

ACT I: Prof. Dodgson's study in Oxford, England.

ACT II: The same, an hour later.

(A tea party may be held for younger members of the audience between acts.)

**ACT I
PROLOGUE**

MUSICAL #1- OVERTURE

(AT RISE: CHARLES DODGSON enters in the mid-point of the OVERTURE through SR archway. He is returning to his house after a morning of teaching. He is wearing a hat and coat, a vest, a full-sleeved shirt, buttoned to the throat but no tie. He walks with a jaunty step that is both keeping with the tempo of the music and suggests the eccentric nature of this man. He crosses below the center table, and up to the statue in the USL corner of the set. He removes his coat, hangs it on the statue, starts to cross back right, remembers the hat on his head, removes it and tosses it onto the head of the statue. Once again, he crosses right, fumbling in his vest pocket. He produces several slips of paper, which he bobbles and drops to the floor. He picks them up, crosses up center to the bulletin board and pins them to it. Then he crosses to the SR table, picks up the red notebook and pen, crosses back to above the center table and leans on it to write in the notebook for a few moments. ALICE, carrying her school books, enters through the SR archway and pauses. The OVERTURE ends.)

ALICE: I'm finally here, Professor Dodgson. I didn't think I would ever get Miss Prickett moving. *(ALICE crosses to SR table and places school books there.)*

CARROLL: *(Crosses to the left end of the center table.)*
Where is Miss Prickett now?

ALICE: She's with the other children; your housekeeper offered them tea. What is this one's name?

CARROLL: Mary Katherine O'Malley – not long away from Nottinghamshire.

ALICE: I hope you keep her longer than the last one; she was here such a short time. I don't think I ever got her name right – Car – Cartagena?

CARROLL: It doesn't matter. Would you like some tea?

End of Freeview

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