

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

A one-act play by
Randy Wyatt

Based on the book by Lewis Carroll

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALICE

WHITE RABBIT

MUSHROOM

PIGEON

CATERPILLAR

FROG

DUCHESS

NANNY

CHESHIRE CAT

MAD HATTER

MARCH HARE

DORMOUSE

SOLDIERS (TWO, FIVE, SEVEN)

KNAVE OF HEARTS/EXECUTIONER

KING OF HEARTS

QUEEN OF HEARTS

BIRDS, CREATURES, SOLDIERS, JURORS

PRODUCTION NOTES

In the first production, many modes of technology were used. This is why allusions to video (in the beginning sequence) and projections in PowerPoint (used throughout) are kept in the script. However, the script works just fine with theatrical tricks to take the place of technology. The beginning voice over (V.O.) can be spoken in the darkness before the play begins. The cards at the end can all menace Alice before the stage goes dark. I welcome new interpretations of these tricky moments if you are not inclined to use technology to make them happen (though I must say that the projections with the fall are particularly effective).

Also in our production, the Cheshire Cat was a life-size puppet manipulated by two actors in black with a third actor speaking his lines over a microphone. You may or may not want to go this direction. Similarly, our Duchess was a man in women's clothing. This is also optional, but it worked marvelously for us.

The play features original songs. Productions may create their own music or contact Jeff Mansk, composer for the original production, for his downloadable compositions/soundtracks. Contact details are on the play's order page on the YouthPLAYS website.

(On film: Pond side. In old-time sepia tones, ALICE flickers to life. She lounges, bored, by a pond.)

NARRATOR (V.O.): Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do. Once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it.

ALICE (V.O.): And what is the point of a book...

NARRATOR (V.O.): ...thought Alice...

ALICE (V.O.): ...without pictures or conversations?

NARRATOR (V.O.): She was wondering whether the pleasure of making a daisy chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies when...

(On film: Alice suddenly sees a flash of white.)

ALICE (V.O.): What was that?

(On film: She starts to her feet and runs after it out of frame.)

(On film: Alice runs in a meadow of green.)

It looked like...like a...

(On film: Alice comes to a large hole in the ground. She looks around. She looks in. She decides and crawls into it. The film goes to black.)

(Suddenly, we see Alice, onstage, "falling." Objects in projections slowly fall past her.)

ALICE: Well! After such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house!

(Bump. The fall is over. Alice gets up. A table appears on the projection. A key is on the table.)

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A glass table. And a key. Now where would...oh! A tiny door with a tiny keyhole! But how could anyone ever fit through there? What's this?

(She finds and picks up a bottle.)

"Drink me." It's all very well to say, "Drink me" but I will check to see if it is marked "poison" first.

(She checks. It isn't.)

No. Well then.

(She drinks.)

Curious. Tastes like...roast turkey...toffee...pineapple... buttered toast...OH.

(The projections grow around her.)

I must be shutting up like a telescope. Oh! I do hope I stop soon, or I might go out altogether, like a flame on a candle. There. I'm the right size for the door! But now I am so small...how will I do anything? I can't even reach the key.

(Her foot bumps a glass box with a cake inside.)

"Eat me." Well, I'll eat it. And whether it makes me grow to get the key, or small enough to slide under the tiny door, I don't much care which.

(She eats the cake. The objects around her shrink.)

Dear, dear! How queer everything is today! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? But if I'm not the same, the next question is, who in the world am I?

RABBIT: *(Off:)* Oh dear oh dear. I shall be late.

ALICE: What...who is that?

(The RABBIT hurries on, checking his waistcoat pocket watch.)

RABBIT: Oh my ears and whiskers.

ALICE: I knew it! I knew I saw him with a waistcoat and pocket watch!

RABBIT: Oh my ears and whiskers, she'll have my head. Oh she'll have my head.

ALICE: Yoo hoo! Mister Rabbit!

(Rabbit is startled and scampers off.)

Oh no! Come back, I didn't mean to scare you! Come back!

(She runs after him. The stage transforms into Wonderland. Various strange, small CREATURES randomly wander through. Alice runs in. The Rabbit is nowhere to be seen.)

Mister Rabbit! Oh. I've lost him. Where did he go?
Where am I? Curiouser and curiouser!

(The creatures take notice of Alice.)

PIGEON: Serpent!

BIRD: Serpent!

SEVERAL CREATURES: Serpent!

ALICE: I'm not a serpent! Let me alone!

PIGEON: Serpent, I say again! *(Beginning to sob:)* I've tried every way, but nothing seems to suit them!

ALICE: I haven't the least idea what you're talking about.

PIGEON: As if it wasn't trouble enough hatching the eggs, but I must be on the lookout for serpents, night and day! I haven't had a wink of sleep these three weeks!

ALICE: I'm very sorry you've been annoyed.

PIGEON: And just as I'd taken the highest tree in the woods, and just as I was thinking I should be free of them at last, here you are again! Ugh, Serpent!

BIRD: Serpent!

SEVERAL CREATURES: Serpent!

ALICE: But I'm not a serpent, I tell you! I'm a — I'm a —

BIRD: Well?

ANOTHER BIRD: What are you?

PIGEON: I can see you're trying to invent something!

ALICE: I — I'm a little girl.

(All the Creatures roar with laughter. Some leave.)

PIGEON: A likely story indeed! I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never one with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent, and there's no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!

ALICE: I have tasted eggs, certainly, but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know.

PIGEON: I don't believe it, but if they do, why, then they're a kind of serpent: that's all I can say.

ALICE: I've — never thought about that before.

PIGEON: You're looking for eggs I know that well enough. And what does it matter to me whether you're a little girl or a serpent?

ALICE: It matters a good deal to me, but I'm not looking for eggs, as it happens, and if I was, I shouldn't want yours: I don't like them raw.

PIGEON: Well, be off, then!

BIRD: Be off!

PIGEON: Serpent!

BIRD: Serpent!

PIGEON: Serpent!!

ALICE: I'm not a — oh, forget it.

(Alice storms off as the Birds fly away. She is alone.)

Well! So rude! I've never in all my life met pigeons as rude as that. Serpent. I'm not a serpent. But — they all laughed when I said I was a little girl. I don't even know who I am here. Am I still me? Maybe I'm not. Who is me?

(The sound of drums. Smoke. Alice investigates. The CATERPILLAR appears on his mushroom, smoking his hookah.)

CATERPILLAR: Who are you?

ALICE: I — I hardly know, sir, just at present — at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.

CATERPILLAR: What do you mean by that? Explain yourself!

ALICE: I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir, because I'm not myself, you see.

CATERPILLAR: I don't see.

ALICE: I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly, for I can't understand it myself, to begin with, and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.

CATERPILLAR: It isn't.

ALICE: Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet, but when you have to turn into a chrysalis — you will someday, you know — and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel quite strange, won't you?

CATERPILLAR: Not a bit.

ALICE: It would feel very strange to me.

CATERPILLAR: You! Who are you?

ALICE: And here we are, right back at the beginning again. I think you ought to tell me who you are first.

CATERPILLAR: Why?

ALICE: (*Storming off:*) Oh I've had enough.

CATERPILLAR: Come back!

(Alice stops, but doesn't turn around.)

I've something important to say!

(Alice slowly turns around and slowly comes back. The Caterpillar calmly smokes.)

Keep your temper.

ALICE: Is that all?

CATERPILLAR: No. (*A maddening pause.*) So. You think you're changed, do you?

ALICE: I'm afraid I am, sir. I can't remember things as I used to – and I don't keep the same size for ten minutes together!

CATERPILLAR: Can't remember what things?

ALICE: Things like – things like...

CATERPILLAR: I see you've forgotten them. Recite your lessons from school. "How Doth The Little."

(Alice takes on the recital stance, and begins to recite, but becomes increasingly aware of what she's saying and the Caterpillar's reaction to it as she goes on.)

ALICE: Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.

All mimsy were the borogoves
And the mome raths outgrabe.
Beware the Jabberwock, my son—

(An eerie faraway bit of MUSIC.)

CATERPILLAR: Stop.

(He puffs.)

That is not said right.

ALICE: Not quite right, I'm afraid.

CATERPILLAR: It is wrong from beginning to end.

ALICE: You see? I don't even know what I am saying. Oh, who am I turning into?

CATERPILLAR: What brought you here?

ALICE: *(Remembering:)* The rabbit! A talking white rabbit with a watch and waistcoat. But he hurried away and I lost him.

CATERPILLAR: Find the rabbit.

ALICE: It can't be that easy.

(A FIGURE races across the stage and exits.)

CATERPILLAR: It can.

ALICE: Was that? It's him! Oh, I must catch up to him. Thank you, sir. Mister Rabbit!

(The disapproving Caterpillar and his mushroom vanish. Alice runs in the direction of the Figure, but the Figure runs back onstage. Alice runs after him and tries to speak to him ["Mr. Rabbit!], but his actions are erratic. She finally gets face to face with him and realizes —)

Oh! You're not. I'm terribly sorry.

(The FISH FOOTMAN doffs his hat and goes off running again...and almost bumps into the FROG FOOTMAN. They both clear their throats and straighten up into very formal poses. The Fish Footman has an oversized envelope.)

FISH: *(Solemnly:)* For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet.

FROG: *(Solemnly:)* From the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet.

(They bow, entangling their curls together. Alice bursts into laughter but stifles herself and hides before the Footmen can catch her. The Fish hands the envelope to the Frog, then runs off in a similar manner to the way he came in. The Frog opens the envelope, and reads the invitation. Alice approaches him.)

ALICE: You know, you really oughtn't open someone else's mail. It's really rather —

(A tremendous CRASH from behind the Footman, and a peal of hideous laughter. Alice is horrified. The Footman is unfazed.)

FROG: It is indeed an invitation to croquet for the duchess to play croquet.

ALICE: What was that?!

FROG: The script is most elegant.

ALICE: That noise!

FROG: And such fine paper. But then, she is a Queen.

(Another crash, more laughter.)

What a fine thing it must be — to be a Queen. Don't you think?

ALICE: What is happening?

FROG: *(Philosophically:)* What ever is happening?

(He sighs, then, stands at attention.)

The Duchess.

(He bows low. The DUCHESS races on stage, laughing and pushing a baby carriage ahead of her– the baby is squalling loudly. She is followed by a NANNY, who is wearing several pots and pans strapped to her body, clanging and crashing together as she goes. The Duchess is raucous and careless. She lets the carriage sail ahead of her as she circles around to the Frog. The Nanny catches up to the carriage, much to Alice's relief.)

DUCHESS: For me?

FROG: *(Still bowed, presenting envelope:)* For you, your Highness.

(Duchess takes the invitation and reads it. Meanwhile, Nanny begins roughly bouncing the carriage, singing a frightful lullaby.)

NANNY: *(Beating pans in time:)* Speak roughly to your little boy

And chide him when he sneezes!

He only does it to annoy

Because he knows it teases!

Wow wow wow!

ALICE: Oh PLEASE do be careful. The baby!

(The Nanny shoves the carriage off in a different direction. Alice shrieks and runs after it, but it is intercepted by the Duchess, who is still reading her invitation.)

DUCHESS: Croquet. Another game of croquet with the Queen. Lucky, lucky me. And yet I can't very well say no, can I?

(She sighs, and shoves the carriage away from her to nowhere in particular. Alice runs after it but it is intercepted by Nanny. Duchess hands the invitation back to Frog.)

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I accept.

FROG: (*Who was daydreaming:*) What? Oh, uh, fine. Your Highness.

(*Duchess cuffs him.*)

DUCHESS: Wake up! What kind of footman are you?

FROG: (*Philosophically:*) What kind of footman AM I?

DUCHESS: Stupid!

NANNY: (*Bouncing the carriage violently:*) I speak severely to the boy

I chide him when he sneezes,
For he can thoroughly enjoy
The pepper when he pleases!

(*Nanny whips out a large pepper grinder and grinds pepper into the carriage, much to Alice's horror.*)

ALICE: Oh PLEASE mind the baby! Pepper can't be good for it!

DUCHESS: If everyone minded their own business, the world would go round a good deal faster than it does.

ALICE: Which would not be an advantage. Just think what work it would make for the day and night! You see the earth takes 24 hours to fully rotate on its OH DO PLEASE BE CAREFUL.

(*Nanny has shoved the carriage towards nothing once again, but the Duchess intercepts it, and bounces it mercilessly.*)

DUCHESS: I suppose I shall have to be dressed for a royal occasion too! What a bother and a nuisance.

FROG: (*Bowing low:*) The Cheshire Cat!

(*The CHESHIRE CAT appears, grinning. Alice is intrigued.*)

DUCHESS: Oh him.

ALICE: Why does your cat grin like that?

DUCHESS: ("You moron":) Because it is a Cheshire cat and that's why. (To Baby:) PIG!

ALICE: I didn't know Cheshire cats grinned. I didn't know cats could grin at all.

DUCHESS: You don't know much, and that's a fact.

(The Duchess shoves the carriage towards nothing again, but the clattering Nanny intercepts.)

NANNY: I speak severely to the boy –

ALICE: Please! Don't you know any OTHER nursery rhymes? That one is so horrid!

(Nanny thinks, then, starts a different one. Distant echoey MUSIC plays underneath.)

NANNY: Twas brillig and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.

ALICE: Wait a moment.

NANNY: All mimsy were the borogoves
And the mome raths outgrabe.

ALICE: I've heard that before.

NANNY: Beware the Jabberwock, my son.
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!

ALICE: I don't think that's much better.

NANNY: More pepper!

(Nanny grinds more pepper into the carriage. Alice finally seizes the carriage and picks the baby, wrapped in a blanket, out of it.)

ALICE: You both ought to be terribly ashamed. I have never seen a baby treated in such a way in all my life!

(The baby makes a pig sound.)

Babies require tenderness and care! What sort of nanny are you? Pepper indeed!

(The baby makes several more pig sounds. Alice looks dubiously at the baby, and speaks to it.)

Don't grunt. That's not at all a proper way of expressing yourself.

(The pig grunts and squeals.)

DUCHESS: You may nurse it a bit if you like. I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen!

(The Duchess exits, followed by the Nanny and Frog.)

ALICE: But what am I to do with—?

(But they are gone.)

People come and go so quickly here.

(The pig grunts again.)

If you are going to turn into a pig, I'll have nothing to do with you. Mind now!

(She pulls back the blanket to reveal a pig. It grunts again.)

Oh dear.

(Another grunt. Alice places the pig back in the carriage. The carriage sails away offstage.)

Well. How very odd. Now if I could only—oh!

(She is startled by the Cheshire Cat, who is staring intently at her.)

Hello? Cheshire—puss?

(The Cat wags its tail.)

Well, it's pleased so far. Can you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

CAT: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

ALICE: I don't much care where.

CAT: Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

ALICE: So long as I get somewhere.

CAT: Oh, you're sure to do that if only you walk long enough.

(The Cat's grin separates from the cat, and floats above and around the cat. Alice isn't sure which to address her question to.)

ALICE: What sort of people live around here?

CAT: In this direction...

(The GRIN floats in one direction.)

...lives a Hatter. And in THIS direction...

(The Grin floats in another direction.)

...lives a March hare. Visit either you like. They're both mad.

ALICE: But I don't want to go about mad people.

CAT: Oh, you can't help that. We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.

ALICE: How do you know I'm mad?

CAT: You must be or you wouldn't have come here.

ALICE: How do you know you're mad?

ALICE: How do you know you're mad?

CAT: To begin with, a dog's not mad. You grant that?

ALICE: I suppose so.

CAT: Well, then, a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad.

ALICE: I call it purring, not growling.

CAT: Call it what you like. Do you play croquet with the Queen today?

ALICE: I should like it very much, but I haven't been invited yet.

CAT: You'll see me there.

(The Cat vanishes, then, reappears.)

By-the-bye, what became of the baby? I forgot to ask.

ALICE: It turned into a pig.

CAT: I thought it would.

(The Cat vanishes. Alice turns to go but the grin follows her.)

Did you say "pig" or "fig"?

ALICE: I said, "pig," and I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy!

CAT: All right.

(The Cat vanishes.)

ALICE: Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin, but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!

(There is a clamor that startles Alice. She looks offstage, then her eyes widen, as what she sees is coming very quickly. She

stumbles over herself backing up. The TEA PARTY arrives on a wheeled table. The DORMOUSE is asleep on the table, surrounded by tea things. He is cuddling a large pot of tea. The HATTER and HARE are pushing the table on. Then they set up chairs around it while singing/chanting a poem that Alice finds oddly familiar.)

HATTER AND HARE: He took his vorpal sword in hand:
 Long time the manxome foe he sought—
 So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
 And stood awhile in thought.
 And, as in uffish thought he stood,
 The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
 Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
 And burbled as it came!
 One, two! One, two! And through and through
 The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
 He left it dead, and with its head
 He went galumphing back.

ALICE: What is that?

(They freeze.)

That poem! What is it?

HATTER: Nothing!

HARE: Absolutely nothing.

HATTER: Absolutely nothing.

HARE: Nothing at all.

ALICE: It must be something.

HATTER: Just a trifle I made up.

HARE: Gone like smoke.

DORMOUSE: *(In his sleep:)* Twas brillig, and the slithy toves—

(The Hare pinches him and he squeals awake.)

ALICE: *(Stepping forward:)* He just said –

HATTER AND MARCH HARE: No room! No room!

ALICE: *(Seating herself:)* There's PLENTY of room!

(The Hatter, Dormouse and Hare seat themselves. An awkward pause.)

MARCH HARE: Have some wine.

ALICE: I don't see any wine.

MARCH HARE: There isn't any.

ALICE: Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it.

MARCH HARE: It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited.

ALICE: Your table is laid for a great many more than three.

HATTER: *(Uncomfortably close:)* Your hair wants cutting

ALICE: You should learn not to make personal remarks. It's very rude.

HATTER: Why is a raven like a writing desk?

ALICE: Come, we shall have some fun now! A riddle! I believe I can guess that.

MARCH HARE: Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?

ALICE: Exactly so.

MARCH HARE: Then you should say what you mean.

ALICE: I do, at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know.

HATTER: Not the same thing a bit! You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see."

MARCH HARE: You might just as well say, that "I like what I get" is the same thing as "I get what I like!"

DORMOUSE: (*Snoring:*) You might just as well say, that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe!"

HATTER: It IS the same thing with you. SWITCH!

(All switch to the next chair down. SILENCE.)

MARCH HARE: Take some more tea.

ALICE: I've had nothing yet, so I can't take more.

HATTER: You mean you can't take LESS, it's very easy to take MORE than nothing.

ALICE: Nobody asked YOUR opinion.

HATTER: Who's making personal remarks now?

(Alice fumes. The Hare starts pouring tea into Alice's cup...and pours and pours and pours.)

What day of the month is it?

ALICE: The fourth. (*To Hare:*) Thank you.

HATTER: Two days wrong! I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!

MARCH HARE: It was the BEST butter.

ALICE: (*To Hare:*) THANK you. That's QUITE enough.

(He keeps pouring. She takes her cup away. He keeps pouring.)

HATTER: Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well. You shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife.

MARCH HARE: (*Sulkily:*) It was the BEST butter, you know.

(He finishes pouring the tea onto the table. Alice notices Hatter's watch.)

ALICE: What a funny watch! It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!

HATTER: Why should it? Does YOUR watch tell you what year it is?

ALICE: Of course not, but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together.

HATTER: Which is just the case with MINE.

HARE: The Dormouse is asleep again.

(The Hare pours some tea onto the Dormouse's face. Dormouse wakes with a start.)

DORMOUSE: Of course, of course, just what I was going to remark myself.

HATTER: Have you guessed the riddle yet?

ALICE: No, I give it up, what's the answer?

HATTER: I haven't the slightest idea.

MARCH HARE: Nor I.

ALICE: I think you might do something better with the time than waste it in asking riddles that have no answers.

HATTER: If you knew Time as well as I do, you wouldn't talk about wasting IT. It's HIM.

ALICE: I don't know what you mean

HATTER: Of course you don't! I dare say you never even spoke to Time!

ALICE: *(Cautiously:)* Perhaps not, but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.

HATTER: Ah! That accounts for it. He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. For instance, suppose it

were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you'd only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner!

MARCH HARE: (*To himself:*) I only wish it was.

ALICE: That would be grand, certainly, but then—I shouldn't be hungry for it, you know.

HATTER: Not at first, perhaps, but you could keep it to half-past one as long as you liked.

ALICE: Is that the way YOU manage?

HATTER: Not I! We quarreled last March—just before HE went mad, you know. (*Pointing with his tea spoon at the March Hare:*) It was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing: "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! How I wonder what you're at!" You know the song, perhaps?

ALICE: (*Trying not to notice the Hare chomping an entire loaf of bread:*) I've heard something like it.

HATTER: It goes on, you know, in this way: "Up above the world you fly, Like a tea-tray in the sky. Twinkle, twinkle—"

DORMOUSE: (*In sleep:*) Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle—

(The Hare pours more tea on Dormouse, who shrieks awake.)

HATTER: Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse, when the Queen jumped up and bawled out, "He's murdering the time! Off with his head!"

ALICE: How dreadfully savage!

HATTER: And ever since that, he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now.

ALICE: Is that the reason so many tea-things are put out here?

HATTER: Yes, that's it, it's always teatime, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles.

ALICE: Then you keep moving round, I suppose?

HATTER: Exactly so, as the things get used up.

ALICE: But what happens when you come to the beginning again?

MARCH HARE: Suppose we change the subject. I'm getting tired of this. I vote the young lady tells us a story.

ALICE: I'm afraid I don't know one.

HATTER: Then the Dormouse shall! Wake up, Dormouse!

DORMOUSE: I wasn't asleep. I heard every word you fellows were saying.

MARCH HARE: Tell us a story!

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