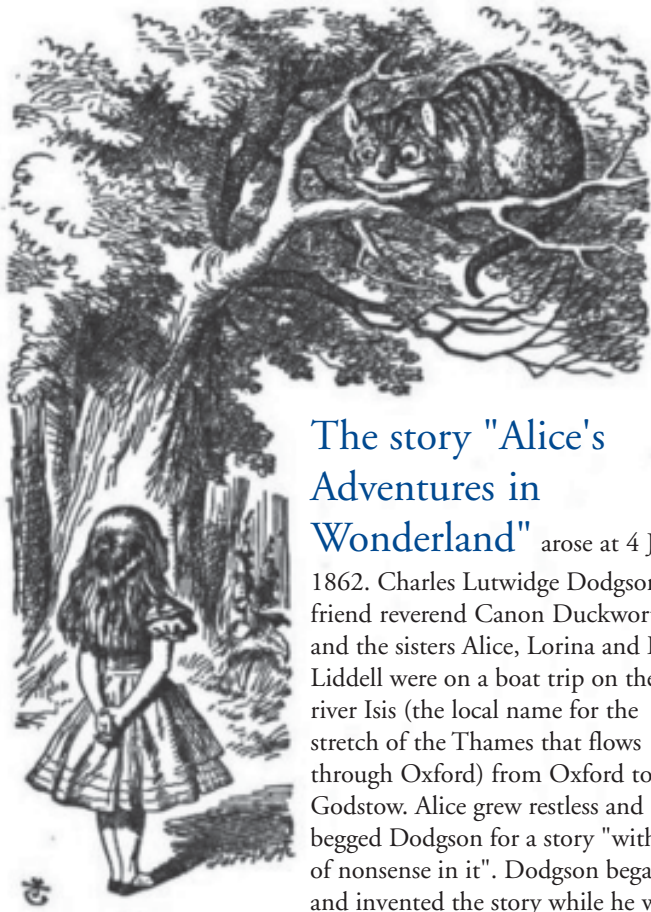


A publication for our valued theatre patrons

Volume 5 , No. 1



The story "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" arose at 4 July 1862. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, his friend reverend Canon Duckworth, and the sisters Alice, Lorina and Edith Liddell were on a boat trip on the river Isis (the local name for the stretch of the Thames that flows through Oxford) from Oxford to Godstow. Alice grew restless and begged Dodgson for a story "with lots of nonsense in it". Dodgson began, and invented the story while he was telling it. Much of the story was based

on a picnic a couple of weeks earlier when they had been caught in the rain. Several times Dodgson tried to break off the story ('all until next time'), but the children were not to be put off. They didn't return at the Deanery until late in the evening. On two other boat trips, Dodgson continued the series of 'Alice stories'. This is how Duckworth described the trip afterwards:

"I rowed stroke and he rowed bow (the three little girls sat in the stern) ... and the story was actually composed over my shoulder for the benefit of Alice Liddell, who was acting as 'cox' of our gig ... I remember turning round and saying, 'Dodgson, is this an extempore romance of yours?' And he replied, 'Yes, I'm inventing it as we go along.' "

In an article in the New York Times of April 4th 1928, Alice Liddell recalled:

"The beginning of Alice was told to me one summer afternoon, when the sun was so hot we landed in the meadows down the river, deserting the boat to take refuge in the only bit of shade to be found, which was under a newly made hayrick. Here from all three of us, my sisters and myself, came the old petition, 'Tell us a story' and Mr. Dodgson began it. Sometimes to tease us, Mr. Dodgson would stop and say suddenly, 'That's all till next time.' 'Oh,' we

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Alice in Wonderland

A charmingly clever and imaginative selective dramatization of Lewis



Carroll's two classics

In this stage version, the charming, affable Narrator begins the play. "The story they are about to see is a classic." He attempts to elaborate, despite constant interruptions from the Wonderland characters. His prologue concludes when the Queen of Hearts marches on stage, and tells him to "get on with it!" or "Off with his head!" Naturally, he hastens to comply - she IS the Queen, after all. Opening his book, he begins the story: "One sunny afternoon . . ." And the panorama of Wonderland unfolds. The ever-late White Rabbit enters, Alice following. As she chases him through Wonderland, she meets the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, enjoying their perpetual tea party.

She encounters a grinning Cheshire Cat, who tells her: "It doesn't matter which way you go . . . you're certain to get somewhere if you walk long enough." Tweedledum and Tweedledee require her assistance as they engage in a comical mock battle, which ends in a draw. A passing Caterpillar advises her to keep her temper, and Humpty Dumpty also offers her so much confusing advice, that she, in turn, advises him that he may soon need "all the King's horses and all the King's men." She read this in a book. Humpty, flattered to be in a book, scornfully declares he'll never need to be "put together again." (He's wrong.)

The King and Queen of Hearts invite Alice to play croquet. Unfortunately, the Queen makes up her own rules, and insists upon always winning. Then the Knave is brought to trial, he ate all of the Queen's cherry tarts. When Alice protests that the trial isn't fair, the Queen is so shocked at such lese' majeste' - that she decides to have a party.

When Alice arrives, she finds everyone busily eating - invisible food! When the Cheshire Cat appears, offering to show her the way home, Alice is very grateful, and bidding them all goodbye, leaves Wonderland. Later, she wonders if she imagined it all, but the Narrator says: "We know better, don't we?"



"Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" He asked.

"Begin at the beginning," the King said, very gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."



Artist Spotlight Director Keone Fuqua

The Guest Director for *Alice in Wonderland* is a familiar face from Theatre USA productions of the past. Keone Fuqua graduated from USA in the Spring of 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts in Dramatic Arts. He is in the third and final year of his Master of Fine Arts in Performance at the University of Southern Mississippi. While at USA he graced our stage in two classical repertory pieces; *A Doll's House* as the scheming Krogstaad, and *Romeo and Juliet* as the contentious Tybalt. His sword fights with Mercutio and Romeo were among the many hi-lights in that 2002 production. Look at his USA resume again however and you find him as one of the rollerblading Sharks in *The Little Mermaid* and Pokey Turtle in *Eager Beaver Builds a Dam*, both roles he holds in fond memory.

So, it's no surprise to find him directing a Children's Theatre classic like *Alice in Wonderland*.

"I think Children's Theatre is incredibly important to the educational and creative development of any child," he stated at the first meeting of the creative team for *Alice*. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina hard decisions needed to be made. With the turmoil in the school systems should we still try and do it? Where should we do it? etc. Keone was one of the first to voice the need to do the production. "*Alice* is perfect in this situation. It's about someone who finds themselves in a strange world where things are frightening at first. Alice finds the courage to deal with her surroundings. That's great."

On the move to the Laidlaw Theatre versus the Saenger Theatre: "I was hyped to direct in that space (the Saenger), but a goal of mine has always been to come back and direct in the Laidlaw space. The intimacy of the theatre is also perfect for *Alice*. It's great being able to use the house for entrances and exits. It incorporates the audience into the production." Coming back to his Alma Mater has also been a kick. "The energy of the younger students is wonderful. They are really making exciting choices and going for it. I'm having a great time."

He has had great learning experiences while working on his M.F.A. at Southern Miss, but his favorite was working with Director Lou Rackoff of the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival. The production was Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and Keone was Pedro. "His approach to the work was incredibly challenging and rewarding. That's the kind of director I want to be."

What's next? "After finishing my M.F.A. this Spring, I'm applying to the Director's Program with the Drama League of America. It's a highly competitive program which has been a start for many of the best directors around. If not that, something else which will truly challenge me and kick start my career as a director. Who knows where you'll find me next?"

"If there's no meaning in it,' said the King, 'that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any.'"



Parents & Teachers

Help us help your child to see *Alice in Wonderland*

If you are a parent and know that your child's class would enjoy seeing *Alice in Wonderland*, please share this with the teacher.

Teachers if you would like to bring your class to a daytime performances and have not received information about performance, please call now at (251) 460-6305.

School performances:
Tuesday, October 11, Wednesday, October 12, Thursday, October 13, & Friday, October 14 at 9:30 am and 12:00 noon. Group rate applies to daytime shows.

Notes from the Director

As a director, approaching *Alice in Wonderland* is very exciting. Sometimes theatre artists, including myself, can unconsciously forget the heart of why we produce theatre. Productions often come along in which our involvement reminds us of the passion of storytelling and reconnects us to the subtle awareness of why we call the story a "play." Similar to my experiences with Shakespeare, children shows have always sparked a fresh, burning desire within me to actively engage an audience. Moreover, I believe children shows in particular are extreme reminders of the magic of theatre.

Playwright Michele L. Vacca's *Alice in Wonderland* is a delightful adaptation of Lewis Carroll's classic masterpieces: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. As the creator of *Wonderland*, Carroll understood that the power of the imagination is strongest within the mind of a child. A child's mind is indeed wonderful, and many things children see/hear/experience can be interpreted as magical. The conceptualization of the production of *Alice in Wonderland* is ruled by this magical power of a child's imagination. The design team and I use the term "organic" to describe concept elements manipulated by the power of the imagination, such as the nature of something appearing differently than what it may have originally appeared. For example, many things can be frightening at first for a child until they see those things through a different light. Also, kids are masters of amusing themselves when they have no one else to play with. Trees become castles, sticks become magic wands, stumps become tables and chairs, etc. Through the power of imagination other things around them come alive and are personified. So, are talking flowers, animals and insects really that unbelievable? For those of us who have never heard flowers, animals and insects talk, the reason could be that they choose not to talk or we choose not to hear them. These are the types of ideas being explored in the collaboration process.

Linking back to the reminders of why we do theatre, I think it is important to bring up the effect Hurricane Katrina has had on the production of *Alice in Wonderland*. With such a devastating outcome, cancellation of the production was obviously in question. However, we quickly realized that we have an obligation now, more than ever, to reach out to the community through theatre, particularly the children. The story of a little girl named Alice trying to find her way home has new meaning to those of us who are trying to find our way to recovery after such a disaster. The feeling of being lost can be a very frightening experience. Still, Alice's curiosity strengthens the power of the imagination and is what gives her courage through her adventures in the mysterious and strange world of *Wonderland*. She does not give up. I think we all can learn from Alice's courage and determination. The theatre experi-

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ence provides an atmosphere through which shows like Alice in Wonderland can be very uplifting and entertaining. Though the show was originally scheduled to perform at the Saenger Theatre in downtown Mobile, performances will now be held at the University of South Alabama's Laidlaw Performing Arts Center. The change is due to adjustments needed to help make up for being a week behind on build time from the hurricane. Still, I believe the PAC will turn out to be a better atmosphere for the production in general. The Saenger is a beautiful theatre and is full of "old magic," but the PAC theatre will engage the audience in Wonderland more intimately.

I extend the invitation to experience Wonderland to the whole community, adults and children alike. However, I suggest the adults prepare to come as overgrown kids with an open imagination, ready and willing to suspend their disbelief. Those who watch Alice "through the looking glass" with objectivity will be blind to the "wonder" of Wonderland. We look forward to seeing you.

Continued from page 1

would cry, 'it's not bedtime already!' and he would go on. Another time the story would begin in the boat and Mr. Dodgson would pretend to fall asleep in the middle, to our great dismay."

In the end Alice asked him to write the story down for her. According to Duckworth, Dodgson sat up all night and sketched an initial outline. Later he expanded it on a train journey with some adventures that had been told on other occasions. He copied it out again, more carefully and in a hand that Alice would find legible, and left spaces for pictures of his own drawings. He called it "Alice's Adventures Under Ground". Dodgson presented the manuscript to Alice as a Christmas gift, on 26 November 1864.

The British copyright on "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" expired in 1907. After the Bible and Shakespeare, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" is the most frequently quoted and best known in the world. The story has been translated into over 125 different languages, including Korean, Japanese, Egyptian and Arabic. Hundreds of editions have been published ever since.

TICKET & BOX OFFICE INFORMATION
PHONE (251)-460-6306

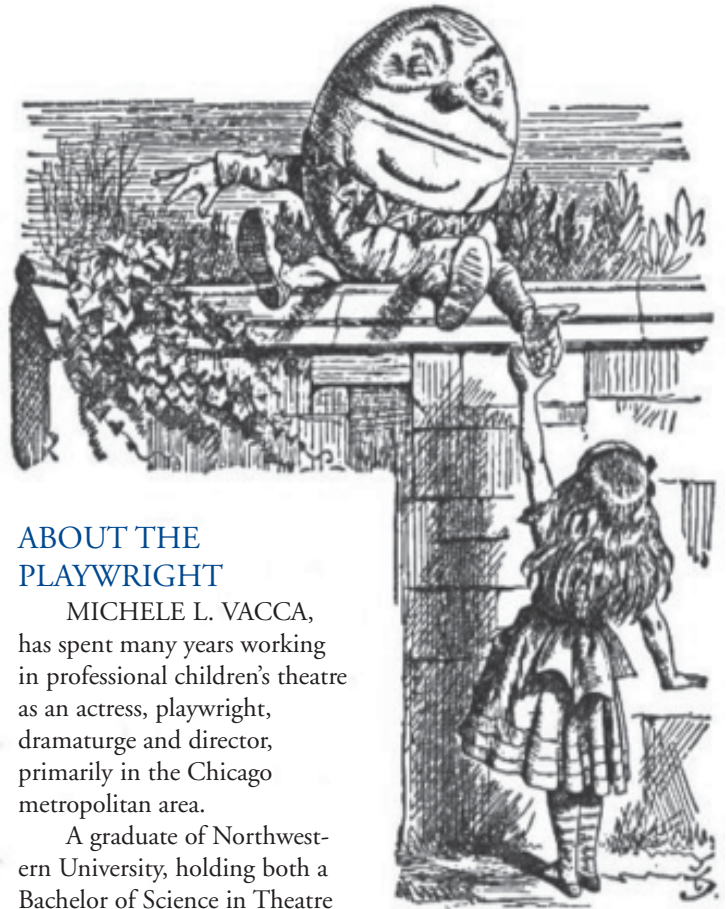
Tickets for Theatre USA's Production of *Alice in Wonderland*:

General Admission \$12.00 Faculty/ Staff \$10.00
Students * & Children \$8.00

The Box Office will be open beginning October 3. Hours are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday and one hour before each performance. Advance reservations with Visa or MasterCard.

The Box Office is located in the lobby of the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center on the main campus of The University of South Alabama. Tickets are sold first come first served. All seats reserved. All sales final. No refund or exchange.

*Student tickets available for all students with valid ID. One ticket per ID.



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

MICHELE L. VACCA, has spent many years working in professional children's theatre as an actress, playwright, dramaturge and director, primarily in the Chicago metropolitan area.

A graduate of Northwestern University, holding both a Bachelor of Science in Theatre and a Master of Arts in Playwriting, Ms. Vacca received a Sam S. Shubert Fellowship for playwriting as an undergraduate.

After she earned her Master's Degree, the Shubert Foundation in New York chose her as one of four graduate recipients in the United States to receive a second Fellowship. Since that time her children's theatre scripts have been performed thousands of times in numerous theatres and schools across the US, as well as internationally.

Cast for Alice in Wonderland

- Alice Kristi Firmin
- White Rabbit ... Sean Alexander
- Madd Hatter Brad Bryant
- March Hare Zeb Brown
- Caterpillar 1 Mike Green
- Caterpillar 2 Iori Nishizawa
- Cheshire Cat 1 Patrick McNerney
- Cheshire Cat 2.. Holly Ladnier
- Dormouse Jamie Key
- Red Queen ... Crystal Williams
- Red King Anthony Brown
- Knave of Hearts Eduardo Roberts
- Humpty Dumpty.. John Cardy
- Tweedledum Joy Ward
- Tweedledee Jason Peregoy
- Tiger Lily Soncithirai Moore
- Marigold Harolyn Fleming
- Rose Shannon Black
- Violet Susanna Williams
- Daisy Carrie Johnson
- Narrator Michael Waldon



'That's nothing to what I could say if I chose,' the Duchess replied, in a pleased tone.

'Pray don't trouble yourself to say it any longer than that,' said Alice.



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**Theatre
USA
Presents**

MICHELE L. VACCA's,

Alice in Wonderland

October 13, 14, 15 @ 7:30 pm

Saturday, October 15 @ 2:00 pm

Call (251) 460-6306 for Ticket Information

Laidlaw Performing Arts Center

On the main campus of the University of South Alabama

