

?Wonderland? to be featured at Grace Tipling Hall May 11 to 19

Written By Marni Walsh

LP Stage Productions is bringing the musical Alice in Wonderland to Grace Tipling Hall next month and the cast of 40 local kids is working hard with the artistic team to put the classic story together. ?Directing is never easy, says LP's Alison Port, ?but a lot of research on the story and new ideas to make things a bit different from other productions is the key. I like to direct things the way I see them.?

As director Ms. Port says she has discovered that ?the story of Alice is very complex, something I never realized watching as a kid. I just thought it was a cartoon. It's about her coming to terms with having to grow up, which is why she has so many challenges in Wonderland.?

With no two shows ever the same, Alison says the challenges for her were trying to get kids, ranging from 6-15 years old, ?to change their voices and experiment with different accents or tones, so they would not sound too much like themselves. We had one rehearsal practicing accents and cartoon voices.?

She said kids were also asked a question every rehearsal about the show or the book and had to research and come back with the answer next rehearsal. ?We feel they should be as knowledgeable about the show as possible, to understand the story and characters better.?

The artistic team includes Alison Port as director, Andrew James as co-director, Noni Thomas as musical director and Kristen Gamache as choreographer. Andrew James says he is amazed by the creativity of the songs and dances. The artistic design team is led by Dale Lundy with assistance from Jason Reidel as painter and puppet-costume creator along with Kaylea Angus.

Co-director Andrew James, the founder of Streams Community Hub in Shelburne, loves working with the kids. ?It is always a challenge taking what is in your head and making it come to life, but Alison and Dale and the stage design and props team is doing an incredible job making the show look as visually appealing as possible. These kids are super talented and are bringing the characters to life. They are adding their own style and flavour, and that makes this show unique.?

Ms. Port says, Alice is shorter than most junior shows, but ?the music is catchy.? Jazz singer and music educator Noni Thomas, who worked with LP Productions on Lion King Jr, That's Entertainment Jr, and A Christmas Story, is the musical director for Alice in Wonderland. Noni enjoys working with students and groups of all ages, and is thrilled to join the LP team ?for this whimsical production that includes amazing choreography, fun costumes and a catchy fast-paced musical score.?

Ms. Port says the technical challenges have been the special effects. ?We are supposed to have a floating bottle and cookie. We also have three Alice's, so we will have to find a way to make the changes quickly from regular Alice to either tall or small Alice.?

The director calls Alice in Wonderland a fast moving and interesting story, ?where the three Cheshire Cats act as narrators, keeping up with Alice as she goes through Wonderland; although sometimes mocking her, they always have her well being in mind.? She thinks audiences will enjoy the characters, ?who are all eccentric and strange. It's a very weird imaginative world Alice has entered.?

?I guess the message is that everyone experiences many difficulties and challenges growing up,? says Alison Port. ?It is how you handle yourself that matters. Always stay strong in your beliefs and what you have been taught by parents or teachers. And communicate with others.?

Tickets for LP Stage Production's Alice in Wonderland are on sale now. The show runs from May 11th to 20th at Grace Tipling Hall in the Town Hall on Victoria Street in Shelburne: Fri. May 11, 12, 18, 19 at 8pm and May 12, 13, 19, 20 at 2pm. Adult tickets are \$18.00 and students and seniors are \$12.00, and are available online at www.eventbrite.com or at the box office 519-925-2600, as well as at the door.