

Alice In Wonderland Jr

Gosford Musical Society – Juniors
Laycock Street Theatre Community Theatre.
January 14-18, 2020.

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Whispers*

Alice In Wonderland Jr

Adapted from Lewis Carroll's novel, with music and lyrics by Sammy Fain and Bob Hilliard, Oliver Wallace and Cycoban, Allie Wrubel and Ray Gilbert, Mack David, Al Hoffman and Jerry Livingston. Gosford Musical Society Jnrs. Laycock Street Theatre Community Theatre. Jan 14 - 18, 2020.

Alice In Wonderland Jr is, at its heart, a story about finding oneself. Lewis Carroll's story is universally loved, having been adapted and readapted since the turn of the last century. If you are unaware of the plot - Firstly, how? Secondly, it's a unique adventure story following a young girl who falls down a rabbit hole and wakes up in a Wonderland filled with all sorts of crazy characters.

Rosie Ross has assembled a strong team of the Central Coast's community theatre makers to bring to life this classic tale. Ross's direction brings a warmth to a script that sorely needs it. The risk with any titles in the Broadway Jr. range is that they can feel hollow and at times trite. Ross avoids this and skilfully ensures the production feels rounded and treated with love. Ross's vision is complemented well by Vivienne McLaren's rich musical direction and Nicole Seggie's spectacular choreography, which is hardly surprising.

Evie Pierce and Charlotte Page share the titular role of Alice, alternating throughout the work's 70-minute run time. Pierce's Alice is refined, proper, and charming, with Page's Alice being bold, energetic, and adorable. Between the two they make the transitions seamless and create a powerful combined performance.

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Scotia Emmetts' White Rabbit is everything you'd expect and more - it's just a shame the script makes such little use of the character. Erin Hobden, Lily Kennedy-Head and Sophie Stiffle share the role of The Cheshire Cat - it's another wonderful combined performance, and possibly the cleverest solution to the script's 'trio' casting requirement. Liam Barbeler's Mad Hatter and Matilda Thomson's March Hare are truly bonkers and lift the already energetic work. Jamie Croft's Caterpillar channels every theatre diva in a fabulous way.

Every time a young person enters this stage, they steal the scene, and then the scene changes and someone else comes on and does it again. Highlights for this reviewer were The Tweedles, played by Finn Alexander and Jada Johnston, who are presented in a perfectly un-Disneyfied way - a refreshing take on the roles. Then there is Eva Berry as The Queen of Hearts. Berry is certainly not a stranger to Central Coast stages, and she owns this role, proving she is one to watch in the future.

The ensemble of 55 support each other beautifully and together ensure the production works as a cohesive whole.

The production design is beautiful - one could almost consider it the other main 'character' of the piece. Amber Markham's set is well considered and allows the focus to be on the young people, rather than overbearing items of scenery. Likewise with Kerrie Fuller and Narelle Wotton's costumes, they play into Ross's reinterpretation of Wonderland while still appealing the Disney purists who may watch this film on repeat. The five-year olds. I'm talking about them.

As always Gosford Musical Jnrs have presented another family friendly work that young and old will adore this school holidays.

