

FOR THE WEEK OF Nov. 21-26, 2002



WEEKLY ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

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Theater review - Palomar's zany 'Wonderland' a feast for the imagination

PAM KRAGEN
Staff Writer

In director Michael Mufson's wildly imaginative production of "Alice in Wonderland" at Palomar College, audiences should expect the unexpected.

In this fanciful, colorful family-oriented production, the tables sprout real legs, the Mock Turtle's shell is an old suitcase and the Cheshire Cat's tail truly has a life of its own. Mufson is known for creating a magical environment with each of his productions, and with "Alice" his creativity (as well as that of costume designer Ken Imizumi and set designer George Gonzalez) flows unimpeded ---- a perfect match for Lewis Carroll's bizarre, nonsensical trip through upside-down Wonderland.

William Glennon's stage adaptation of Carroll's classic Victorian children's novel is mercifully streamlined ---- running just 75 intermissionless minutes, an ideal length for squirmy toddlers. Some characters are missing (Tweedledee, the carpenter, the Walrus and the Knight, to name a few), but the principal plot and most familiar characters are all there.

Adult theater-lovers who prefer a more coherent plot may catch their minds wandering, but children will be enthralled at Alice's unpredictable adventures in colorful Wonderland.

Most delightful is the creative ways Mufson brings the story to life onstage. Alice's shrinking and growing scenes are especially well-conceived, as are the Mad Hatter's zany tea party, complete with galloping tea tables, and the Gryphon, which is actually eight people working together under a feathered cape.

The performances are all appropriately large --- particularly Tiffany Rose Brown's ragingly funny portrayal as the Queen of Hearts. Other standouts are

"Alice in Wonderland"

When: 7 p.m. Nov. 21-23; 2 p.m. Nov. 24

Where: Howard Brubeck Theatre, Palomar College, 1140 W. Mission Road, San Marcos

Tickets: \$12, general; \$10, seniors; \$8, youth

Info: (760) 744-1150, Ext. 2453

John E. Walker as the epically morose Mock Turtle, Carmen Adams as the bizarre Duchess, James Soto as the grinning Cheshire Cat (an uncredited actor plays the cat's often-disembodied tail) and Byron Huskey as the oddball Mad Hatter.

Diminutive, quirky Tori Johnson is ideal as the childlike, wide-eyed Alice, and Eliza Martin does an especially appealing job as the eternally tardy White Rabbit. Anna Tower moves fluidly as the Fish Footman, and Keith Jackson plays the Mouse, whom Alice encounters while swimming in a pool of her own tears.

In smaller roles are Fallon Forte as the Frog Footman, Nina Buck as the Cook, Sarah Gauthier as the March Hare, Joe Dulin as the Dormouse, Philip Sanders as the King of Hearts Erin Floyd as the Knave of Hearts and Katherine Birmingham as the Gryphon. Christine Bull, Sheena Duff and Kiyoshi Sato make up the ensemble, and Fergal O'Doherty offers the voice-overs.

Molly Faulkner choreographed the show's dance scenes, Jim Cooper designed lighting, and Mufson and Jonothan Lewis designed the sound.

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