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PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE



ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Audience Guide to the Ballet

February 10 - 19, 2017

Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, Pittsburgh

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ALICE WONDERLAND

Choreography by Derek Deane

February 10 – 19, 2017 | 11 AM

Benedum Center for the Performing Arts | Pittsburgh, PA

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All performance photos in this guide are by Rich Sofranko and from PBT's 2008 production of the ballet unless otherwise noted.

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Photo: Maribel Modrono, Makoto Ono and Stephen Hadala.

SYNOPSIS

Act I

Alice is playing beside a river while her sister reads a book. She tries to get her sister's attention, but eventually gives up and falls asleep in her sister's lap. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a White Rabbit appears. Alice follows him as he jumps down a rabbit hole.

Alice lands at the bottom of the hole in a long low corridor made entirely of doors. She finds a small table with nothing on it except a tiny gold key and a bottle. Alice discovers that the key will only work in the smallest door in the corridor, which opens into the most beautiful garden Alice has ever seen. Alice drinks the contents of the bottle and starts to shrink. Underneath the table she finds a small cake. She eats the cake and it has the opposite effect to the bottle – she starts to grow and grow.

The White Rabbit drops his white glove and his fan. Alice picks them up and starts dancing with them. Realizing she is lost and alone she suddenly feels very lonely; she starts crying so much that she is soon swimming in a pool of her own tears. As she tries to swim to safety she realizes that she is surrounded by animals that all swim through the pool of tears to the bank. They all sit shivering on the bank and Alice decides to hold a Caucus Race in order to dry the animals' ruffled fur and feathers.



The White Rabbit returns in search of his glove and fan. He and Alice meet an enormous Caterpillar sitting on top of a huge mushroom smoking a large pipe. The Caterpillar conjures up the Garden of Living Flowers and the flowers dance for Alice.

The Frog Footman and the Fish Footman appear with an invitation to the Queen's Croquet Match. In the Duchess's house, the Duchess and the Cook are hard at work in their kitchen. Watched by the Cheshire Cat, the Cook prepares fish with

clouds of pepper while the Duchess and Cook pass the baby from one to the other, and finally to Alice – she looks at the baby and it turns out to be a pig! The Cook and Duchess rush off leaving Alice with the Cheshire Cat. The White Rabbit reappears and whisks Alice off to the Mad Hatter's Tea Party where she meets the March Hare and the Dormouse.

Act II

Alice is taken to the Queen's Croquet Match by the White Rabbit and meets the Royal Gardeners who are painting the roses red. The Queen of Hearts arrives with the entire pack of cards including

the Knave of Hearts. The croquet match begins and out of nowhere the Cheshire Cat reappears to watch the game.

The Duchess returns and tells Alice all about the Queen, but the Queen notices them gossiping. She looks at the Duchess and cries "Off with her head!" The cards, the Queen, the Duchess and the Cheshire Cat all disappear, leaving Alice with the Gryphon. Down by the seashore, Alice and the Gryphon meet the Mock Turtle. Four lobsters appear from the sea and dance the Lobster Quadrille.

Alice is exhausted by all the excitement, and she falls asleep. In her dream the Knave of Hearts appears, and they dance together.

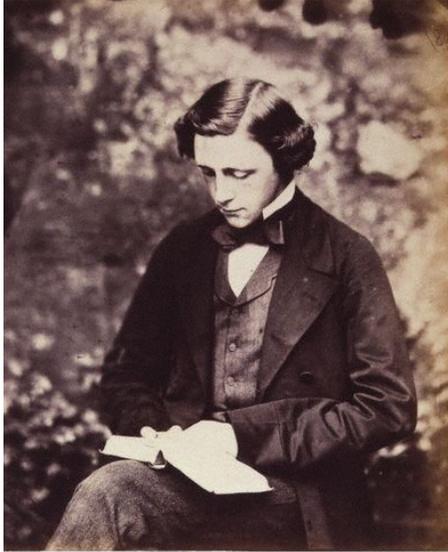
The White Rabbit returns in a great panic and takes Alice to The Trial. The Knave of Hearts has been accused of stealing some tarts! The White Rabbit reads out the accusation and calls the Mad Hatter as the first witness. The Cook is called as the second witness. The court descends into chaos as the Queen of Hearts cries "Off with his head! Off with her head!"

Alice suddenly remembers that most of the characters in the courtroom are just cards. She is no longer frightened of them, and she finds herself back on the river bank with her sister. All the fantastic characters have disappeared, and Alice is left wondering whether it was all just a dream...



Photos, top: Kaori Ogasawara; Left: Nicholas Coppola, Kumiko Tsuji and artists of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre; Right: Stephen Hadala and Maribel Modrono

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lewis Carroll, a revered name in English literature, wore many hats in his life and career. In his comprehensive biography of the author, Martin Cohen writes that

He was an extraordinarily gifted man, and in spite of a deaf right ear and an incurable stammer, lived a busy and productive life. It was not an ordinary life, however, nor are the products of his labors merely plentiful or sufficient. They are, in fact, overpoweringly numerous and often brilliant.

Born Charles Lutwidge Dodgson in 1832, he was the eldest of 11 children. His father was a clergyman in the Church of England, and his mother was said to be exceedingly kind and gentle. He spent the first decade of his life in the quiet farming village of Daresbury where he developed a love for animals and flowers—a love so vividly described in the gardens and forests of his *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Although his home life was strict and regimented it was also filled with family activities, projects, and games, many of which Charles initiated. He edited a family newspaper to which all of his siblings contributed. Titled *Mischmasch*, it was the training ground for development of his skills as a writer, poet, and creator of games and puzzles. He continued to work on this paper even after he left for Christ Church College at Oxford.

Oxford nurtured his budding genius in letters and an unusual brilliance for logic and mathematics. At just 23 he was made a don (a professor with tenure) in mathematics—it was almost unheard of for this advancement to occur so quickly. He remained at Oxford for the next 50 years where his many talents grew and evolved, writing articles and stories for periodicals and other publications, as well as treatises on mathematics and logic that are still referenced today. For his stories he wrote under the pen name Lewis Carroll. He even engaged his fascination for word games when he chose this name, taking his given name, Charles Lutwidge, and reversing and Latinizing it to create Lewis Carroll.

Carroll developed an avid interest in photography and became quite well known for his portraits of children and others.

He was ordained as a deacon in the Church of England but preached only occasionally. He argued for the benefits of vaccination when Victorian England was wary of such things, and also supported the theater as a wholesome and educational form of entertainment when the Church was opposed to it. He even helped to establish a school that would eventually become the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Carroll was also a great correspondent, keeping a register of every personal letter he wrote and received. At his death there were more than 98,000 letters in the register.

Photo: Self portrait, 1863, Wikipedia

Did You Know?

Carroll and most of his siblings stuttered. It plagued him in his role as a clergyman: he was at times unable to complete certain phrases while delivering a sermon. He is thought to have named one *Alice* character, the Dodo, after his inability to sometimes pronounce his last (given) name without stammering (“Do-Do-Dodgson”). One biographer noted that while Carroll’s stories brought to literature inspired and ingenious fantasy worlds, they also took Carroll himself to places where stuttering did not exist.*

**Lewis Carroll and His World*, by John Pudney

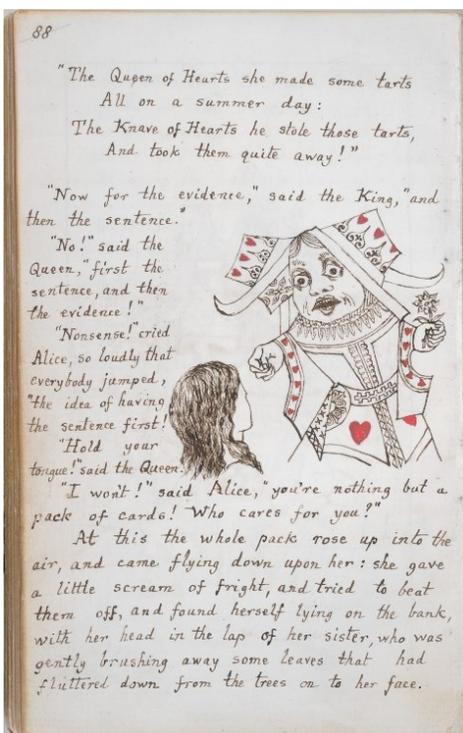
HOW THE STORY BEGAN

In 1855 a new dean of Christ Church College, Henry George Liddell, arrived amid a flurry of publicity due to his ideas of reform. Though Dodgson opposed some of Liddell's ideas, the two became friends and Dodgson often visited with him, his wife and three daughters. Over the next several years Dodgson spent many hours with the children, taking them on picnics and boating excursions, singing songs and spinning stories.

On a warm and breezy summer day, July 4, 1862, this party of three little girls, Charles' storyteller friend Robinson Duckworth—whose songs and beautiful singing voice also delighted the girls—set off in a rowboat on the Isis River for a lovely afternoon of picnicking and fun. The children implored him to weave another story. In his diary he wrote,



I can call up almost as clearly as if it were yesterday – the cloudless blue above, the watery mirror below, the boat drifting idly on its way, the tinkle of the drops that fell from the oars, as they waved so sleepily to and fro, and (the one bright gleam of life in all the slumberous scene) the three eager faces, hungry for news of fairyland, and who would not be said 'nay' to...



Dodgson told a story about a little girl named Alice and the magical creatures she meets underground. He named the main character of his tale for the middle Liddell girl, who was 10 years old at the time. Biographer Anne Clarke describes that Dodgson was captivated by Alice Liddell's "gentle, affectionate nature and her unflinching courteousness to all, whatever their station in life . . . and with her trusting readiness to accept the wildest improbabilities, her eager curiosity and a hint of assertiveness . . ." At the end of the excursion Alice begged him to write down the story for her; on the train back to London the following day Dodgson began the manuscript for what would become one of the world's most important works of children's literature.

Dodgson completed the story in 1864 and gave it to Alice. He called it *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*; it was hand-written and illustrated by Dodgson himself. He changed the title to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* when it was published by Macmillan in 1865.

Top image: Alice Liddell (1861); left: page from *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, 1864. Wikipedia, .

Did You Know?

Alice in Wonderland is the most quoted work of Western literature, behind the Bible and Shakespeare's canon.

A LITERARY TIMELINE



The Rabbit started violently, dropped the white kid-gloves and the fan, and hurried away into the darkness as hard as he could go.

1862

Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), the three Liddell girls, and a friend take a boat ride on the Isis River in England. To entertain the children Charles tells a story that becomes the basis for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

1864

Dodgson gives a hand-written and illustrated version of the story, titled *Alice's Adventures Underground*, to Alice Liddell, his inspiration. He dedicates it as "A Christmas Gift to a Dear Child in Memory of a Summer Day."

1865

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is published by Macmillan Co. in London, illustrated by John Tenniel.

1871

Through the Looking-Glass is published as a sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

1890

The Nursery Alice, a shortened version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for very young children, is published.

1911

With Tenniel's eyesight failing, he gives permission to illustrator Harry Theaker to complete 16 color plates based on Tenniel's original drawings for a new edition of a one-volume *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.

Illustration: One of Theaker's plates; <http://aliceinwonderland150.com/>

A THEATRICAL TIMELINE

From the beginning, *Alice* had great potential on the stage and screen; since then the story has been the inspiration for many productions. Here are just a few moments in the theatrical evolution of the story.

1866

Lewis Carroll suggests that *Alice* would be a successful pantomime (a type of British musical comedy).

1886

The first theatrical productions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* appear on the London stage, including an operetta (with dancing) that became a Christmas tradition for more than four decades.

1903

The first movie version (a silent film) of *Alice* is produced in England.

1933

Cary Grant is the Mock Turtle, W.C. Fields is Humpty Dumpty, and Gary Cooper is the White Knight in a Paramount Pictures version of *Alice in Wonderland* (it was a box-office flop).

1951

Walt Disney Productions releases the animated film *Alice in Wonderland*.

1953

The first *Alice in Wonderland* ballet is produced by London Festival Ballet (now English National Ballet).

1995

Derek Deane creates a new *Alice in Wonderland* for English National Ballet. (PBT's current production—purchased in 2015.)

2010

Walt Disney Productions releases a new *Alice in Wonderland* directed by Tim Burton, using live action and CGI animation.

2016

Alice Through the Looking Glass is released as a sequel to Disney's 2010 *Alice in Wonderland*.



Photo: © Walt Disney Company

Did You Know?

Lewis Carroll was not a fan of ballet. He attended one in 1855 (the ballet *Eva*, danced by the great Romantic ballerina Fanny Cerrito) and pronounced: "I never wish to see another ballet." He reportedly didn't like ballet's artificiality and the way it exposed dancers' bodies. However he loved the theater and was enthusiastic about dance in general.

THE CHOREOGRAPHY

Choreographer Derek Deane



Derek Deane trained at the Royal Ballet School from 1970 to '72, when he was invited to join the professional company at age 18. He was promoted to soloist, principal and finally to senior principal dancer by 1982. He danced major roles in The Royal Ballet's classical repertoire and in works by the most important choreographers of the 20th century.

During his performing career he began to choreograph, creating ballets for The Royal Ballet, Sadler's Wells Ballet and Birmingham Ballet. After retiring from the stage he struck out on his own as an international teacher and choreographer. In 1990 he became resident choreographer and assistant director for Ballet di Roma in Italy.

Photo: Deane rehearsing Dmitri Kulev and Julia Erickson in his *Hungry Heart*, 2004

Deane returned to England and from 1993 to 2001 he was Artistic Director of the renowned English National Ballet (ENB). He premiered new productions of major classical works—*Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Paquita*, *The Nutcracker*—as well original works. He pioneered ENB’s hugely successful “in the round” productions—his arena version of *Swan Lake* has been seen by over 750,000 people worldwide. His *Alice in Wonderland*, *Swan Lake*, and *Strictly Gershwin* were at the time the highest-earning productions in the company’s history and had record-breaking attendance.

A friend of Diana, Princess of Wales, Deane appeared in two BBC documentaries about her life, and was himself the focus of two other documentaries, *Boss Diaries: A Year in the Life of an Artistic Director*; and *Agony and Ecstasy: The Making of Swan Lake*. He has been nominated for two Lawrence Olivier awards and was awarded the Order of the British Empire for Excellence in Dance in 2000.

Deane created three world premieres for PBT, *Hungry Heart . . . We All Have One!* (2004), *Simply Simon* (2005) and *Anything Goes!* (2006). His most recent work, *Hamlet*, had its world premiere at Shanghai Ballet in 2016.

The Choreography

I love the madness of it and tried to put it to dance.

-Derek Deane

Alice in Wonderland is a classical-style story ballet, with big corps de ballet numbers, a grand pas de deux and solos that display technical prowess. The movement palette is largely what we would think of as classical ballet, with an emphasis on pristine and precise technique, extension, pointe work, and symmetry, but it also has a contemporary flair that the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette called “dazzling.” Deane doesn’t use traditional ballet mime in the story but rather gives his characters recognizable, everyday human movements to help carry the storyline. A consistent theme throughout the ballet is movement comedy, and the humor and magic with which Carroll created the story.

Watch for these moments in the choreography:



- “The Garden of Living Flowers,” a big corps de ballet dance, which recalls the classical “Waltz of the Flowers” in *The Nutcracker*.
- The corps de ballet dancing as the pack of playing cards, which has a more modern, Balanchine-like feel. Note the difference in the movement quality between the two corps dances.
- The Dream Pas de Deux: Deane’s grand pas de deux, a must in a classical story ballet.

*PBT’s Alice brims with delightful scenes,” 4/19/08

Photo: Alexandra Kochis and Christopher Rendall-Jackson



- The Lobster Quadrille: a group of four dancing lobsters whose crisp movements (and head tilting) bring to mind the Pas de Quatre (dance for four swans) in *Swan Lake*. Watch this [Swan Lake reminder!](#)

- Character-defining movements for the animals: the caterpillar slithers; the Cheshire Cat preens and leaps; the White Rabbit bolts and scampers.

- The madcap, connected and complicated movements of groups of dancers to convey the chaotic nature of the story—especially in the Tea Party scene and the scene that takes place at the Duchess' house in Act 1.



Top: Maribel Modrono and Alexandre Silva; Left: Makoto Ono, Kumiko Tsuji, Stephen Hadala

THE MUSIC

When Deane envisioned the ballet he already knew he wanted the music to be by the Russian composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Lewis Carroll was a contemporary of both Tchaikovsky and ballet master Marius Petipa, whose collaborations produced three of the greatest classical ballets: *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*. Deane wanted his *Alice* to follow the style and classical genre of these iconic story ballets.

Deane approached composer/arranger Carl Davis and asked if he thought he could put together a score that included music for caterpillars, a Mad Hatter, a Queen of Hearts—music that suited Carroll's extraordinary story and characters. Davis accepted the challenge, orchestrating pieces from Tchaikovsky's "Album for the Young" (using 15 of 24) as well as excerpts from other works. Deane loved the result, noting that the score had a "life of its own" and that he "was very much led by the music" as the production took shape.* Listen to a few highlights from the ballet:

[Overture and Down the Rabbit Hole](#), "The Tempest," 1873

[White Rabbit](#), "Album for the Young," Nos. 3, 19 and 20, 1878

[Pool of Tears](#), "Chanson Triste," Piano Music Vol. VI, 1876-78

[The Tea Party](#), Suite No. 1, Scherzo, 1878-79

[The Pack of Cards](#), "Festival Coronation March in D," 1883

[Lobster Quadrille](#), "Album for the Young," No. 14, 1878

[Dream Pas de Deux](#), "Album for the Young," No. 21, 1878

*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, 4/13/08

THE DESIGN



Sue Blane, designer of the set, scenery and costumes for *Alice in Wonderland*, was born and raised in England. She studied at Wolverhampton College and the Central School of Art and Design, completing her degree in 1971.

She is most well known for her costume designs for the original stage and screen versions of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1970s) and has dozens of additional credits for stage (theater, opera and ballet) and film. She was nominated for a Laurence Olivier award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance for *Alice in Wonderland* (1995) was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) by Queen Elizabeth in 2007.

Choreographer Derek Deane wanted to create the *Alice* ballet “in the style of the book in all ways possible.”* For the designs, Blane worked from Deane’s own concepts and drew much from the original illustrations by Sir John Tenniel for the 1865 publication and Harry Theaker’s color plates for the 1911 version (it was Theaker’s work that established the popular image of Alice as a girl with blond hair, blue dress and white pinafore). Deane believed that emulating the original artwork was crucial because of its influence connecting readers—over 150 years and across the world—to the story.



Nearly 100 artists and artisans throughout England contributed to building the designs – set pieces, scenery and costumes. The production includes 250 costumes, 18 wigs, 30 prosthetic pieces (you will notice the Mad Hatter’s nose and chin from the back of the theater!), massive scrimms, and large-scale props, such as the enormous sunflowers, ears of corn and teapot in the Tea Party scene. Deane worked with an illusionist to vividly recreate some of the famous, surreal episodes in the story, such as Alice falling through the rabbit hole, the hallway of doors, and the pool of tears.

*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, 4/13/08



Photos, top: ENO.org; middle: Maribel Modrono as Alice and Theaker’s color plate; bottom: Corey Bourbonniere as the Mad Hatter, by Duane Rieder, and Maribel Modrono, Christopher Bandy, Kumiko Tsuji, Luca Sbrizzi.



The costumes are rich, imaginative and complex, with numerous components and accessories for each. The White Rabbit costume, for instance, includes a bow tie, white shirt with blue velour sleeves, white shirt insert, red waistcoat, blue velvet tailcoat, a heart tabard (sort of an apron), a cape with a card design, white velour breeches, leg padding and blue and white striped tights (and there are at least 4 of each of these components to customize the fit to different dancers!)

Constructing the costumes was a huge challenge, requiring experimentation with fabric durability and color saturation. Many had numerous trial runs before the final design was set. The fun, eye-catching (and square!) card tutus went through five variations—the challenge being to come up with a tutu that 1.) didn't throw the dancers off balance, 2.) wasn't too heavy (with the extra netting required to keep the tutu from flopping) and 3.) could be maneuvered through doorways without being bent out of shape.



Top photo: Hannah Carter and William Moore, by Duane Rieder; Right: Artists of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and School.

When we first did it in 1995 the stage rehearsal for the first six minutes took eight hours. It's a massively difficult thing to do. The magic and theatricality . . . challenges everybody, not just the dancers."

-Derek Deane, Pittsburgh Tribune Review, 4/13/2008

Some Online Resources

The story of the gutsy, adventurous little girl named Alice continues to capture our imaginations more than 150 years after Lewis Carroll introduced her to the world. Dozens of online articles and websites explore the impact of *Alice in Wonderland* on literature and culture (and even science). Here are a few to check out:

- Read the book at literature.org.
- There is a ton of great information at a website celebrating [Macmillan's 150th anniversary](#) of the original publication.
- Learn about Carroll's life and publications at poetryfoundation.org.
- The origins of the story in Oxford are explored in this New York Times article: "[Finding Alice's 'Wonderland' in Oxford.](#)"
- Read about how *Alice* changed the way we see children's literature in an article in the [Independent](#).
- Neuroscientists find "hidden truths" about the human brain and the *Alice* stories in this [BBC article](#).