

“Wonderland!” Play Review

By: McKenzie Bray

Wednesday, Nov. 6, was the opening night for the St. Norbert College (SNC) theater department’s production of “Wonderland!,” a more modern retelling of Lewis Carroll’s “Alice in Wonderland” written by April Beiswenger, associate professor of theater here at SNC.

For those who didn’t see the play, the point of the story is that our main character, Alice, is trying to get into the Queen of Hearts’ music festival but is struggling to acquire a ticket. Eventually, she makes it in, but not without jumping over a few hurdles alongside other memorable characters.

The acting was good, with performances by Natalie Waurio as Alice, William Mlenar as the Mad Hatter, Aoife Marinan as the Queen of Hearts, Nathan Bekkers as the King of Hearts, Klaraleigh (Kit) Sanders-Mikkelson as the Cheshire Cat, Jacqueline Stumpf as the White Rabbit, Eric King as the March Hare, Katherine Ikaunieks as the Dormouse, Christopher Guresky as the Caterpillar, Kiley Williams-Chvosta as the Duchess, Derek Hottenstein as Tweedledee and Dominick Azzolina as Tweedledum. Additional actors included Icarus Jessel, Kimberly Thomas, Abigail Walton, Genevieve Larson, Kellee Hangartner and Daniel Walter who all played multiple smaller roles in the production.

The overall performance was produced well. The stage and props were beautiful, with the main colors of the set being various shades of red and pink, as well as the sound and lighting cues matching the scenes and setting the tone perfectly.

Although the overall production was good, there were some holes in the plot that made it confusing and hard to follow, even for a story in the setting of Wonderland.

The opening scene immediately throws us into a group of Wonderland characters surrounding a ticket booth, wanting to get a ticket to the festival – one of these characters being Alice. Then, after failing to get a ticket from the booth, Alice begins her journey to find a ticket. While this is all fine, as the show progresses, we are never told any details about the festival.

What is it? Why does Alice want to get into it so badly? How did she even find out about it?

Not only were there holes in the plot that left me and the group I attended the play with a lot of questions, but there were some scenes that did not transition the best. The specific scene I am thinking about is the transition from when Alice is speaking with the twins, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, to when she then meets the Cheshire cat. There was no real transition between the scenes – no lighting changes, no sound cues, no change in scenery – so it was very confusing when Alice started randomly looking for a cat, even though there were no signs or mention of a cat in the previous scene.

My other critique is that it didn't feel like there was any real end to the story. After Alice makes it to the festival, and after a while of interacting with the King and Queen of Hearts, a trial begins where everyone is trying to figure out what happened to the Queen's tarts, which are believed to have been eaten by the Knave of Hearts. However, in the end, the trial goes nowhere, nobody really knows what happens to the tarts and nobody knows what else happens with the festival.

Even though there were some minor issues with the plot, overall the production was done well, all thanks to the amazing cast and crew, and I personally think that with some minor tweaks and additions, this could be a really good play that can be put on again in the future.