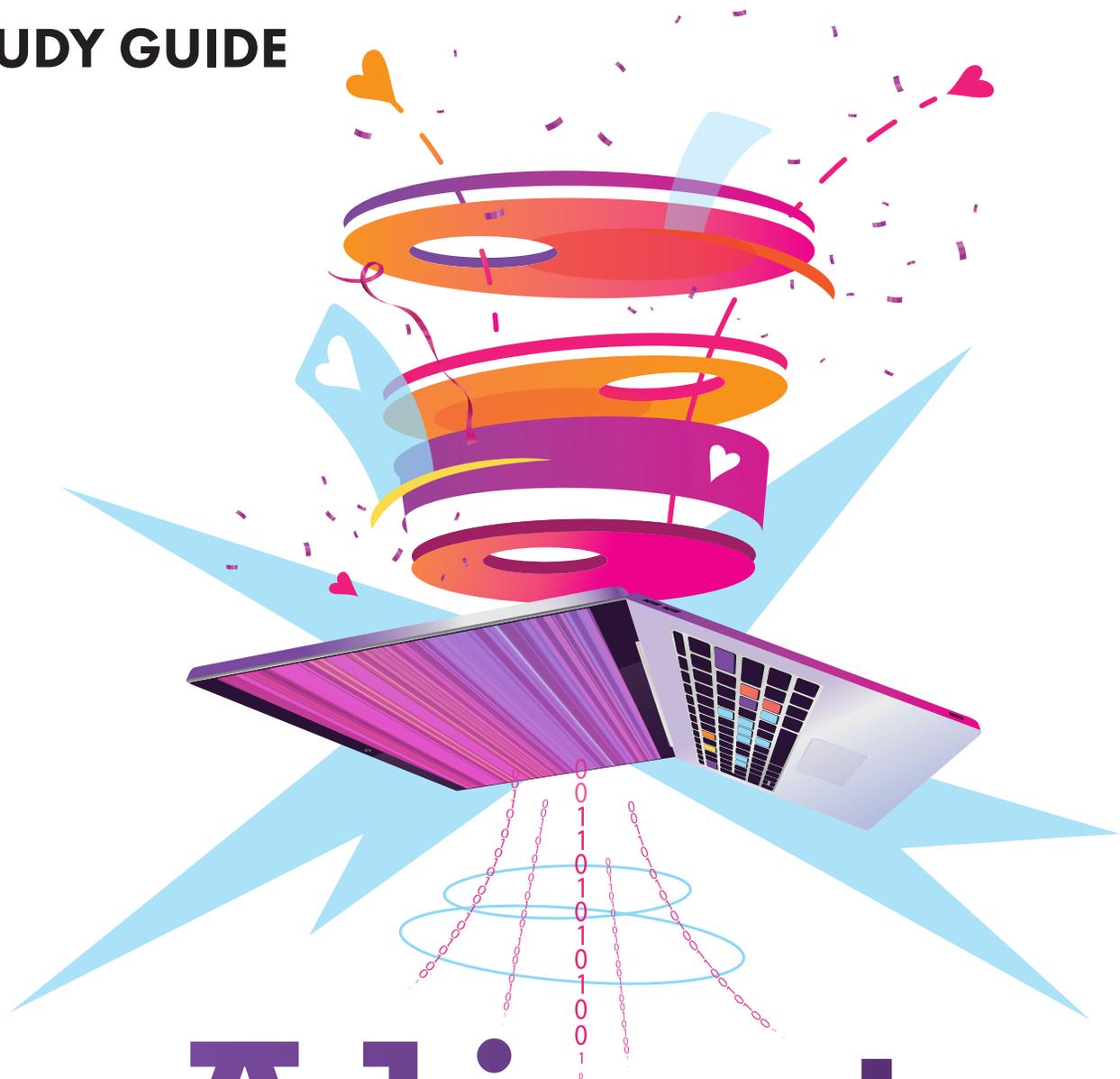




# South Coast Repertory

**STUDY GUIDE**



# Alice's WONDERLAND

book, music and lyrics by Julia Riew & J. Quinton Johnson  
Conceived by Linda Chichester & David Coffman  
directed by Rob Salas

# Welcome to the Theatre

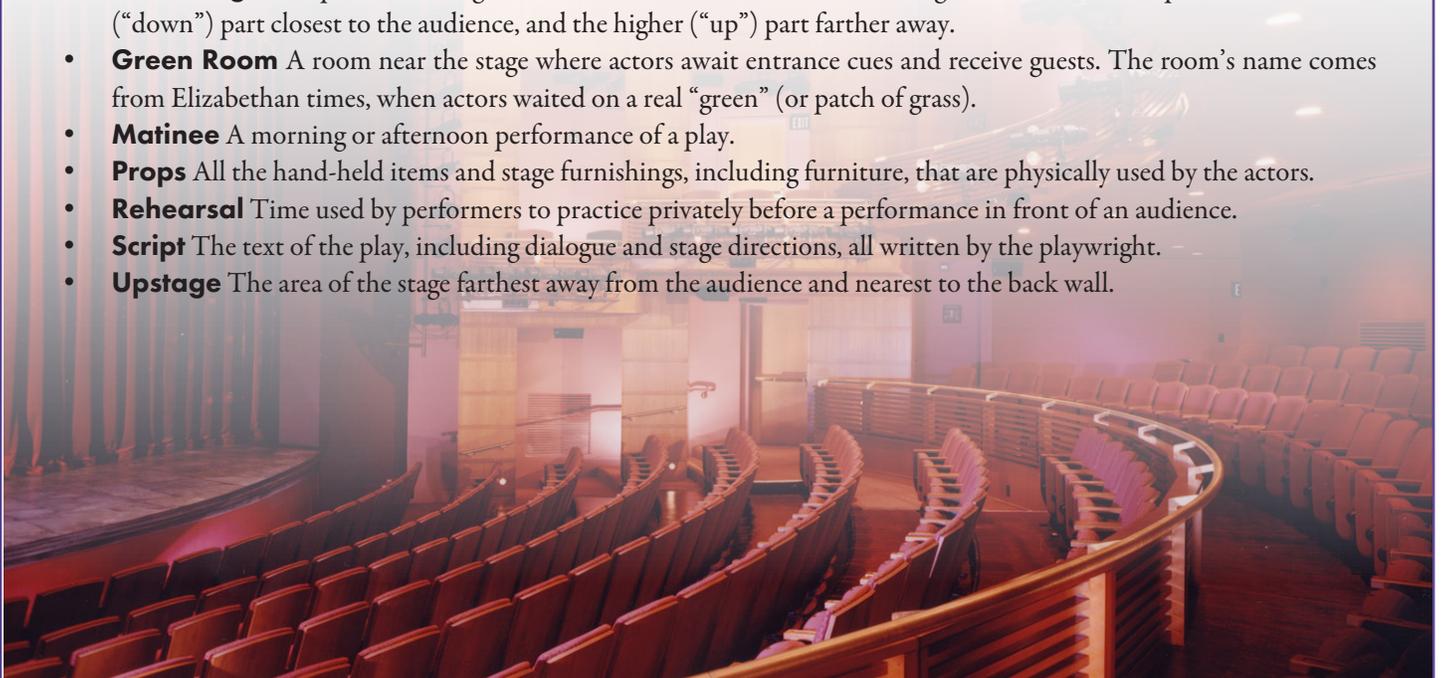
**T**heatre is an art form that depends on both the artists and the audience. A performance is influenced by an audience, just as an audience is influenced by a performance. With this play, the artists and staff of South Coast Repertory have created a special new world for you. Sometimes that world is so exciting that you can barely hold still. But remember: once the play begins, you are connected to all the other people in the audience, as well as to the actors on the stage, because you're all in the same room. The actors can see you, hear you and feel you, just as you can see, hear and feel them. Your attention, involvement, responses and imagination are a real part of each and every performance. The play can actually be made better because of you!

## STUDENT TIPS FOR THEATRE TRIPS

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Take your seat in the theatre before going to the bathroom or getting a drink of water.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- Absolutely no chewing gum, eating or drinking in the building.
- No backpacks, cameras or electronic devices are permitted in the theatre.
- Feel free to talk quietly in your seats before the show.
- Show your appreciation by clapping for the actors at the end of the play.
- After the lights come back up, wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.

## THEATRE VOCABULARY

- **Backstage** The space behind the acting area, unseen by the audience.
- **Blocking** The movement onstage designed by the director and performed by the actors.
- **Box Office** A windowed space at the front of the theatre building where tickets are sold.
- **Choreography** The art of creating and arranging dances onstage.
- **Cue** The last words or action of an actor immediately preceding the lines or business of another actor.
- **Downstage** The part of the stage closest to the audience. At one time, stages were raked, or sloped, with the lower (“down”) part closest to the audience, and the higher (“up”) part farther away.
- **Green Room** A room near the stage where actors await entrance cues and receive guests. The room’s name comes from Elizabethan times, when actors waited on a real “green” (or patch of grass).
- **Matinee** A morning or afternoon performance of a play.
- **Props** All the hand-held items and stage furnishings, including furniture, that are physically used by the actors.
- **Rehearsal** Time used by performers to practice privately before a performance in front of an audience.
- **Script** The text of the play, including dialogue and stage directions, all written by the playwright.
- **Upstage** The area of the stage farthest away from the audience and nearest to the back wall.



# The Play

## THE STORY OF ALICE'S WONDERLAND

**A**lice is a bright, passionate teenager who loves videogames. She loves them so much that she's created her own—a game called “Wonderland.” The world of Wonderland is one of countless possibilities, where players can level up until they arrive at the palace to meet the beloved ruler, the Queen of Hearts. The game's slogan is simple: “No matter who you are in real life, you can be the hero in Wonderland.”

When Alice finishes her game, she feels like she's on top of the world. (Maybe even a real-life hero!) She's confident “Wonderland” will impress her friends, too. Unfortunately, the game's debut gets off to a rocky start, and Alice's friends quickly lose interest. Alice is disappointed and angry. *If they don't care, why should she?* Alice slams her laptop shut, which corrupts the game's data—and infects it with a virus.

In the middle of the night, a mysterious figure appears by Alice's bedside. She wakes up to find Rabbit, the “Wonderland” character designed to guide players through the game. Rabbit tells Alice to follow him down to Wonderland. It's in trouble, and the characters need her to save them. Alice is reluctant at first, but she's intrigued by Rabbit. So, she \*jumps\* in the air and begins to fall down... down... down... straight into...

### ~ WONDERLAND ~

That's right. Alice lands *inside* the game. But it's not at all like the world she created. Something's off. Rabbit explains that one day there was a great Blackout—as if someone yanked out the entire world's cord—and ever since, a virus has spread throughout Wonderland. That virus is causing glitching, skipping, and pixelating. More importantly, it's causing widespread panic among the characters. A panic that's traveled all the way to the top. Alice witnesses firsthand a disheveled Queen of Hearts “delete” (or decapitate!) a character who's experiencing a glitch due to the virus.

Something is very wrong in Wonderland! The merciless Queen of Hearts is nothing like the character that Alice designed. But ever since the Blackout, the Queen has become terrified that her subjects no longer believe in her goodness and ability to rule. She deletes anyone who shows even the slightest sign of a glitch, and she needs constant admiration. The Queen *lives* for the applause, and she'll do anything to get it. In fact, that evening she's planning a massive concert at the palace. As long as the Wonderlanders are clapping for her, the Queen can pretend that nothing is wrong.

Alice is convinced the Queen of Hearts must be the *real* virus infecting Wonderland—and there's only one way to fix things: stop the applause. Alice must save Wonderland from the murderous Queen. Alice sets off, determined to head straight to the palace. But Rabbit reminds her that she hasn't unlocked that level yet. Wonderland is a videogame, after all. Like everyone else, Alice has to start at the beginning. Alice \*jumps\* and lands in...

### ~ LEVEL 1 ~

There, Alice meets Caterpillar, whom she tries to convince to join her mission to stop the Queen. Yet despite the problems in Wonderland, Caterpillar is content just vibing and thriving. *If the virus could get him at any time, he might as well just chill, right?* But Alice recognizes that, beneath his act, Caterpillar is scared. She eventually persuades him to meet her at the palace to challenge the Queen. Once she does, Caterpillar opens a nearby portal, and Alice \*jumps\* into...

### ~ LEVEL 2 ~

At first, Alice thinks she must be lost. No one's there. Then, a Cat appears—a Cat who seems more interested in her phone than in Alice. When Cat finally looks up from her screen and sees Alice in front of her, she thinks the girl is absolutely *perfect*...for one of the Queen's backup danc-

ers. Alice refuses. She would never dance for the Queen! Cat is more of a challenge to win over than Caterpillar, but Alice remains undaunted. She questions Cat's devotion to the Queen, and Cat can't help but be swayed. Finally, Cat agrees to join Alice and Caterpillar at the castle. Then, Alice \*jumps\* through the next portal to...

### ~ LEVEL 3 ~

IT'S THE MAD HATTER'S TEA PARTAYYYY!!! The hottest underground event. No talk of the fascist Queen here. Just music and tea. Lots and lots of tea. Maybe *too* much tea? The Mad Hatter's certainly had one cup too many. But he's always ready for another. In her effort to get him to join her at the palace, Alice takes the Hatter's tea away. And that makes him...well, MAD. He attempts to trap Alice in the party. Even though she hasn't unlocked the next level—and is technically breaking the rules of her own game—Alice \*jumps\* and suddenly finds herself at...

### ~ THE PALACE ~

At the Queen's palace, everything is glitching and pixelating out the wazoo. Alice is alone and calls out for her friends—Rabbit, Caterpillar, and Cat. But when they arrive, they're followed closely by the Queen. Alice realizes her friends have sold her out. They're simply too scared that the Queen will delete them. The Mad Hatter shows up, too, but he can't stop glitching. The Queen blames Alice (and Alice's *rule-breaking*) for the Hatter's fate. Alice is arrested and thrown in the dungeon—where she'll stay until the Queen publicly deletes her at the royal concert.

Alice isn't sure what to do next. She wants to give up. She tells

Rabbit that she wants to quit the game. But then, Alice has an idea. She knows how to defeat the Queen and save Wonderland! She \*jumps\* and is transported to...

### ~ THE STADIUM ARCADIUM ~

At the stadium, Alice confronts the Queen. The Queen suddenly begins to glitch with the virus and then—in a *rage*—tries to infect all those around her. Boom! The Queen zaps the Mad Hatter with the virus. *Boom!* The Queen zaps Cat. *Boom!* The Queen zaps Caterpillar. *Boom!* The Queen zaps Rabbit. But before the Queen can destroy all of Wonderland, Alice is able to put her hand on the Queen's heart. Instantly, the virus disappears. The simple gesture cures the Queen—and all of Wonderland.

How did Alice save Wonderland? She remembered why she made the game in the first place. It wasn't because she wanted to impress people. It was because she loves videogames. Alice's self-doubt was the virus, and it infected everything around her.

Quite simply, Alice forgot to listen to her heart.

Back in the real world, Alice works out the final kinks in her videogame and, once again, shows it to her friends. This time, everything goes off without a hitch...or a glitch. Because this time, Alice remembers that no one is going to believe in her if she doesn't believe in herself.

Alice costume rendering by designer Alexis Carrie.



# The Lasting Legacy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

**J** Quinton Johnson and Julia Riew's contemporary musical, *Alice's Wonderland*, is inspired by English author Lewis Carroll's 1865 children's novel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The book tells the story of a girl named Alice, who finds herself bored and sleepy on a hot summer day as she sits on the bank of a river. Suddenly, Alice sees something peculiar: a white rabbit wearing a waistcoat with a pocket watch. As he dashes by, the rabbit exclaims, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!" Intrigued, Alice follows him down a rabbit hole. Once inside, Alice is confronted by a peculiar and ever-changing world—a world with a series of strange and exciting adventures in store.

Upon its publication, Carroll's book was a critical and popular success. He wrote a sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, in 1871. Both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* have enjoyed enduring popularity and numerous adaptations. In 1951, Walt Disney Productions released the animated

musical, *Alice in Wonderland*, which combines plot elements from both books. It remains perhaps the most famous adaptation of Carroll's work to this day.

**An engraving of the White Rabbit by artist John Tenniel from the original edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland***



## Alice's WONDERLAND

### A MODERN ALICE

While J. Quinton Johnson and Julia Riew's *Alice's Wonderland* uses Carroll's work as a jumping off point, it is anything but a faithful adaptation. Instead, the writer-composers assemble some of the characters from the Wonderland universe, modernize them, and then drop them into a completely original story.

The musical's storytelling is fast and funny. The score incorporates elements of hip hop, pop, and gospel. The visual world is bright, colorful, and electric. In short, *Alice's Wonderland* is far from a familiar stage adaptation—and yet, its world is just as captivating.

# Going by the Book

## AN EXCERPT FROM ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

*This short excerpt from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is taken from "Chapter VII: A Mad Tea-Party," in which Alice sits down for a confusing—and frustrating—tea party with the Mad Hatter, March Hare, and (very sleepy) Dormouse.*

**T**here was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. "Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse," thought Alice; "only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind."

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: "No room! No room!" they cried out when they saw Alice coming. "There's *plenty* of room!" said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

"Have some wine," the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I don't see any wine," she remarked.

"There isn't any," said the March Hare.

"Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it," said Alice angrily.

"It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited," said the March Hare.

"I didn't know it was your table," said Alice; "it's laid for a great many more than three."

"Your hair wants cutting," said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

"You should learn not to make personal remarks," Alice said with some severity; "it's very rude."

The Hatter opened his eyes *very* wide on hearing this; but all he said was, "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"

"Come, we shall have some fun now!" thought Alice. "I'm glad they've begun asking riddles.—I believe I can guess that," she added aloud.

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer

to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!'"

"You might just as well say," added the March Hare, "that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like!'"

"You might just as well say," added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, "that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe!'"

"It *is* the same thing with you," said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn't much.

**An engraving of the Mad Hatter, March Hare, and Dormouse by artist John Tenniel, which was featured in the original edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.**



# Classroom Activities

## BEFORE THE SHOW

1. Have your students read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll on their own—or read it aloud as a class. (A link to the full text can be found on the Resources page of this study guide.)

After reading some or all of Carroll's story, ask your students to:

- a. Describe some of the strangest or funniest moments in the plot.
  - b. Write or tell their own episode that they might add to Alice's adventure. What new character(s) might Alice meet? Would it be an animal, a person, or an object? What would they talk about?
2. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a famous example of "literary nonsense"—a genre in which a work's "meaning" isn't always clear while it plays with humor, logic, and the sounds of words (real ones and gibberish). Have the students research other examples of literary nonsense and find a favorite story or poem that fits the genre. Some good examples include works by Dr. Seuss, Shel Silverstein, and even The Beatles. (Check out the Resources page of this study guide for more links about the literary nonsense genre.)

- a. Compose a nonsense poem as a class. For inspiration, check out Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" (included in *Through the Looking-Glass*): <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42916/jabberwocky>.

3. Discuss the differences between a prose story (told out loud or written down) and drama. Explore what it means to "adapt" a story into a play or musical.

- a. Have the students talk about how they think the story of *Alice's Wonderland* will

be brought to life in South Coast Repertory's musical stage version.

- b. What might the scenery on stage look like?
  - c. What about the costumes?
  - d. What do you think the songs will sound like?
4. Discuss the different jobs involved to bring a production like *Alice's Wonderland* to life. Have the students research the occupations on the list below and share what they find with the class.

- a. Actor
- b. Director
- c. Playwright
- d. Composer
- e. Lyricist
- f. Music Director
- g. Choreographer
- h. Designer
- i. Stage Manager
- j. Stage Crew

5. In *Alice's Wonderland*, the protagonist is an aspiring videogame designer. Have the students research the computer programming terms on the list below and share what they find with the class. (Check out the Resources page of this study guide for more links about programming vocabulary.)

- a. Code/Coding
- b. HTML
- c. Conditionals
- d. Bug
- e. Debug/Debugging
- f. Loop
- g. Pixel



# WORDS! WORDS! WORDS!

Listen for the following words during the performance.

**Hyperbolic:** (adjective, usually used in reference to language) exaggerated or over the top

**Clout:** (noun) power, stature, or influence

**Ravenous:** (adjective) very hungry or greedy for something

**Indecision:** (noun) the state of being unable to make a decision

**Typify:** (verb) to be the essential or typical example of something

**Indelible:** (adjective) impossible to forget, remove, or erase

**Vexing:** (adjective) causing annoyance or worry

**Treacherous:** (adjective) dangerous or untrustworthy

**Charade:** (noun) an act or situation that seems true but isn't

**Validation:** (noun) the act of recognizing or proving something's or someone's worthiness



Can you unscramble these words from the list above? (Answers on page 9.)

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Tlouc      | 6. Pyityf      |
| 2. Suonevar   | 7. Reachersout |
| 3. Xevgin     | 8. Eellibind   |
| 4. Alvadinot  | 9. Heardac     |
| 5. Chyipleorb | 10. Cisinodein |

## WORD SEARCH

Can you spot all the words from the list above? They can be found in all directions—vertically, horizontally, and even diagonally. (Some words are listed backwards, too!)



## BRINGING ALICE'S WONDERLAND FROM PAGE TO STAGE

South Coast Repertory's production of *Alice's Wonderland* is directed by Rob Salas. In this interview, Salas answers a few questions about his job as director and the musical's modern take on a classic.

**South Coast Repertory:** What does a director do?

**Rob Salas:** A director is a listener and a decision-maker! First, a director listens to the intent of the playwright through the script of the play. Then, when we get our team of artists and actors in place, a director does their best to listen more—this time to our collaborators' ideas. After all that, we help everyone make final decisions on how to make the show work best!

**SCR:** *Alice's Wonderland* is a modern adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. What's the best part of working on a new version of an old story?

**RS:** My favorite part is seeing a young audience today laugh and respond to these classic characters. Alice and her friends were created more than 150 years ago—I love that we keep them alive today in a new way!

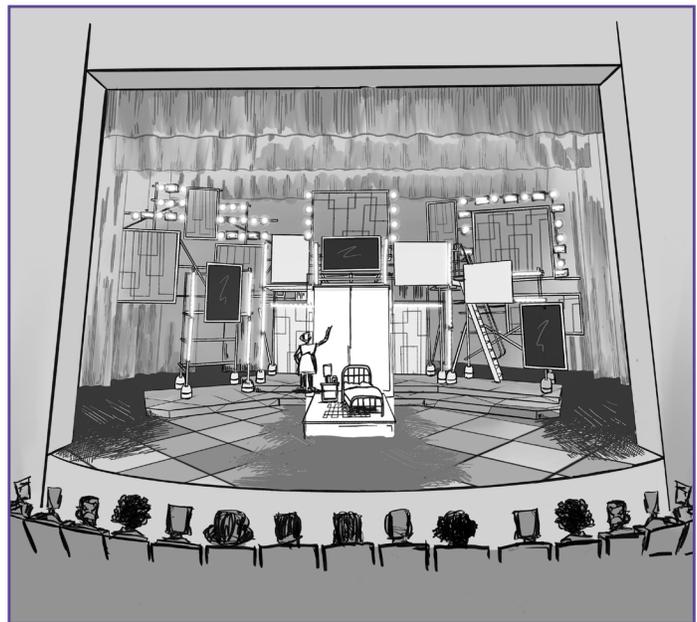
**SCR:** Where do you look for inspiration when you're imagining how you might bring a script to life on stage?

**RS:** When it's a musical play like this I like to listen to a song from the play, close my eyes, and let my imagination go free! When I was a little kid, I always loved making stories and playing pretend, so I try to make my mind go back to playing on the playground again.

**SCR:** What should audiences coming to *Alice's Wonderland* be prepared for?

**RS:** Not everyone knows this version is both a video game and a musical. Get ready to see a video game on stage, and to hear some amazing voices singing great new music!

**Set design model and rendering by designer Shaun Motley**



## AFTER THE SHOW

### Discussion about the Theatre

*Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance and ask the students about their experience attending live theatre.*

1. What was the first thing you noticed about the theatre? What did the stage look like?
2. Discuss the technical elements of the production—the sets, costumes, lights, and sound. Ask the students what they liked best and why. How did these elements create and define the virtual Wonderland?
3. The Queen and the Wonderlanders express themselves through fashion. What did the costumes tell you about the characters? Whose look did you love the most? Why?
4. In musicals, characters express themselves through music and movement. How did the songs help move the story forward? How did the choreography show you the differences between the characters?
5. How is attending a live performance different from attending a movie? How does your experience change when you know the story is being performed live and the actors can see and hear you?

### Discussion about the Play

1. What was your favorite moment in the play? What was the funniest? What was the most surprising?
2. What are some of the major differences between the original story and this virtual videogame-inspired version? What parts of this version felt exciting and new?
3. What is unique about Alice? What does she learn about herself that allows her to save Wonderland?

**Caterpillar costume rendering by designer Alexis Carrie.**

4. Creating and designing a videogame takes a lot of skill in math and science. What other jobs might be a good fit for someone who loves those subjects?
5. The Queen of Hearts struggles between being a Good Queen and a Bad Queen. What makes a leader good or bad? What skills are required in good leadership? What does leadership mean to you?



## ACTIVITIES

1. Video Game Description: Be like Alice and create a description for your own videogame by filling in the blanks.

Location:

Unique Ability:

Sidekick:

Hero:

Final Boss:

Special Items:

"In \_\_\_\_\_, our young hero known as \_\_\_\_\_ with the power to \_\_\_\_\_ sets off on an  
[location] [hero] [unique ability]  
epic adventure to defeat \_\_\_\_\_. They are joined by their trusted friend \_\_\_\_\_, who helps them  
[final boss] [sidekick]  
collect \_\_\_\_\_ to level up. If they can accomplish their mission, the world will finally be free. Game On!"  
[special items]

2. Karaoke Playlist: In this musical, the folks in Wonderland love to sing and dance. You can be a Wonderlander, too! Create a karaoke playlist inspired by the show. Have a sing-off with family and friends.
3. The Mad Hatter's Hat: Draw your version of the Mad Hatter's signature accessory. What color would your hat be? Big or small? What animal would live inside it? Feel free to send us your drawings for a chance to be featured on SCR's social media pages!



## LETTERS OF THANKS

**W**rite a letter of thanks to SCR and describe the most memorable aspects of attending a performance of *Alice's Wonderland*.

South Coast Repertory  
Attn: TYA  
PO Box 2197  
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197



# Resources

## MORE ABOUT ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

The full text of the original 1865 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (with illustrations):

<https://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/wp-content/uploads/alice-in-wonderland.pdf>

The full text of *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* split into chapters. This resource also contains an audio recording of each chapter: <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/1/alices-adventures-in-wonderland/>

## MORE ABOUT PLAYWRIGHTS/COMPOSERS J. QUINTON JOHNSON AND JULIA RIEW

J. Quinton Johnson (official website): <https://jqintonjohnson.com/>

Julia Riew (official website): <https://juliariew.com/>

## MORE ABOUT LITERARY NONSENSE

"Adventures in Literary Nonsense" from Minds in Bloom (Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose):

<https://www.cdm.org/blog/adventures-in-literary-nonsense/>

"Definitions of Nonsense Literature" from Gromboolia: The Nonsense Art and Literature Site:

<https://www.nonsenseliterature.com/nonsense-resources/definitions-of-nonsense-literature/>

"From Lewis Carroll to John Lennon: The Irrational Magic of Nonsense Verse" from the Los Angeles Public Library blog: <https://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/blogs/lapl/irrational-magic-nonsense-verse>

"How to Write a Nonsense Poem" by Luke Edley:

<https://thanetwriters.com/essay/style/how-to-write-a-nonsense-poem/>

## MORE ABOUT COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

"Coding Terms for Beginners" from Coda Kid: <https://codakid.com/coding-terms-for-beginners>

"A Complete Beginner's Guide to Programming" from We Learn Code:

<https://welearncode.com/beginners-guide-programming/>

"Coding Terminology for Kids" from Code Monkey:

<https://www.codemonkey.com/blog/coding-terminology-for-kids/>

"Design Your Own Games" from PBS Kids: <https://pbskids.org/designsquad/blog/design-your-own-games/>

## WORD SCRAMBLE ANSWER KEY:

1. Clout
2. Ravenous
3. Vexing
4. Validation
5. Hyperbolic
6. Typify
7. Treacherous
8. Indelible
9. Charade
10. Indecision
11. Flounce
12. Nuisance

## WORD SCRAMBLE ANSWER KEY:

T	I	H	A	X	L	T	T	R	D	V	S
R	P	N	P	D	U	X	Y	C	G	A	U
I	C	J	D	O	K	K	P	S	T	L	O
E	I	G	L	E	H	N	I	A	O	I	R
F	L	C	N	T	C	E	F	H	Q	D	E
Z	O	N	K	I	T	I	Y	I	B	A	H
K	B	V	O	P	X	F	S	L	H	T	C
H	R	A	P	D	Z	E	Y	I	N	I	A
G	E	P	O	W	V	J	V	X	O	O	E
J	P	R	A	V	E	N	O	U	S	N	R
U	Y	E	L	B	I	L	E	D	N	I	T
M	H	C	H	A	R	A	D	E	R	G	

Cat costume rendering by designer Alexis Carrie.

