



THEATRE REVIEW: Alice and the White Rabbit

Paul McIlwee follows Indigo Moon Theatre down the rabbit hole

Alice and her exploits in the imaginary Wonderland have enjoyed something of a boom recently, what with the long awaited release of Tim Burton's high-on-visuals, low-on-coherency movie, *Alice in Wonderland*. Now a low key twist on the CS Lewis tale hits the stage, courtesy of London-based Indigo Moon Theatre company. I see the production at the Ardhoven Theatre along with an audience of excited Enniskillen school children.

St Mary's Church in east Yorkshire inspired this new adaptation of the story. Alice, as a marionette, takes a trip to the church and encounters the White Rabbit on the wall. When the Rabbit steals her jam tarts, a chase ensues through the rabbit hole to Wonderland so Alice can retrieve the tarts. On the way she encounters Wonderland regulars the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat, March Hare and of course the evil Queen of Hearts. Can she get her tarts back before they get scoffed?

Indigo Moon Theatre has managed to craft an original spin on the tale, using an array of techniques to bring Wonderland to life. Upstage there are screens showing footage taken in St Mary's Church. The idea of filming where the story took its inspiration is a great idea because not only does it give the story some grounding, but we also get to see where it all began for Lewis Carroll.

From there, the audience is transported into shadow puppet world that is inspired by the gothic church itself. The show continues at a nice pace, with that each new character allowed just the right amount of time onstage, never lingering longer than they should. There's much humour to be had, with even us adults chuckling at what is ostensibly a children's show. The children are encouraged to join in on the performance, which has a pantomime feel at times with plenty of 'he's behind you' moments.

Anna Ingleby voices the characters with flair, while Haviel Perdana provides the music. Ingleby spends the majority of her time behind a screen and projects the characters brilliantly by voice alone. She's a great storyteller, and pulls off all the voices expertly, whether she is the softly-spoken Alice, the permanently in-a-rush Rabbit or the haughty Red Queen herself. Perdana's music hits all the right notes (pardon the pun) at the right times, nothing ever feeling out of place.

The only real criticism for me would be the church-like screens the action plays out on. The thick black beams do have a tendency to block out some of the action and can be distracting. On the whole, however, *Alice and the White Rabbit* is entertaining for the young, and the young at heart.



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