

## Theater Review: 'Lookingglass Alice' even more inventive

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*Author: BETTY MOHR, Daily Southtown Theater Critic*

With its trademark style of physical acrobatic playfulness, Lookingglass Theatre Company in Chicago has mounted many fascinating productions. But this summer's magical and enchanting "Lookingglass Alice" is its most innovative best.

While the show was fascinating when it premiered here in 2005, before going on the road in an East Coast tour, the return of this magical fantasy is even more death-defying dangerous and imaginative.

This circus-style telling of the classic "Alice in Wonderland" tale takes you on a whimsical journey with Alice down the mind-bending rabbit hole. This is, of course, where the young girl meets the White Knight, the Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit, the Red Queen, Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum, the Cheshire Cat and Humpty Dumpty.

Adapted and directed by Lookingglass's artistic director David Catlin from Lewis Carroll's English Victorian novel, this show features breathtaking circus stunts and spectacular surprises.

Things get "curiouser and curiouser" as life lessons in this strange and magical world turn logic on its head. For instance, there's the laughable "It takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place; if you want to get anywhere, you have to run twice as fast." You know that you've left the bounds of reason when that saying begins to make perfect sense.

The show is filled with one mind-boggling feat of derring-do after another. It is a thrill to watch a cat fly through space, a queen float on water and chairs pop out of a subterranean space. But for jaw-dropping shock, there is a scene in which a character appears to fall to his death right onto the stage.

Everything in this show has been honed to imaginative perfection by Lookingglass' creative technical team and the extraordinary performers.

Mara Blumenfeld's costumes of a towering Red Queen and egg-beater headgear for the White Knight are hilariously inventive. So, too, are Dan Ostling's fantasy set; Chris Binder's magical lighting, which helps Alice navigate from square to square; Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi's acrobatic choreography; composers Andre Pluess and Ben Sussman's lush music; and Scott Osgood's ropes, ladders and secret trap door.

Last, but definitely not least, there is the standout cast -- Lauren Hirte, Lawrence D. DiStasi, Anthony Fleming III, Jesse J. Perez and Kevin Douglas -- that delivers spellbinding performances.

For adults and children, "Lookingglass Alice" is a work of sumptuous delight and sheer genius. Whatever you do this summer, don't miss it.

'Lookingglass Alice'

When: Through Aug. 12

Where: Lookingglass Theatre in the Water Tower Water Works, 821 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago

Tickets: \$20 to \$58

Information: Call (312) 337-0665 or visit [www.lookingglasstheatre.org](http://www.lookingglasstheatre.org)

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