

REVIEW: Lookingglass Alice (Lookingglass Theatre)

A vaudeville-circus-magic-show-theater extravaganza!



[Lookingglass Theatre](#) and [The Actors Gymnasium](#) present

Lookingglass Alice

Adapted and directed by [David Catlin](#)
Adapted from the stories of [Lewis Carroll](#)
at [Water Tower Works](#), 821 N. Michigan ([map](#))
through August 1st | [tickets](#): \$32-\$64 | [more info](#)

reviewed by [Katy Walsh](#)

Shoes drop, floors open, balls fly, it's a typical vaudeville-circus-magic show-theatrical extravaganza.

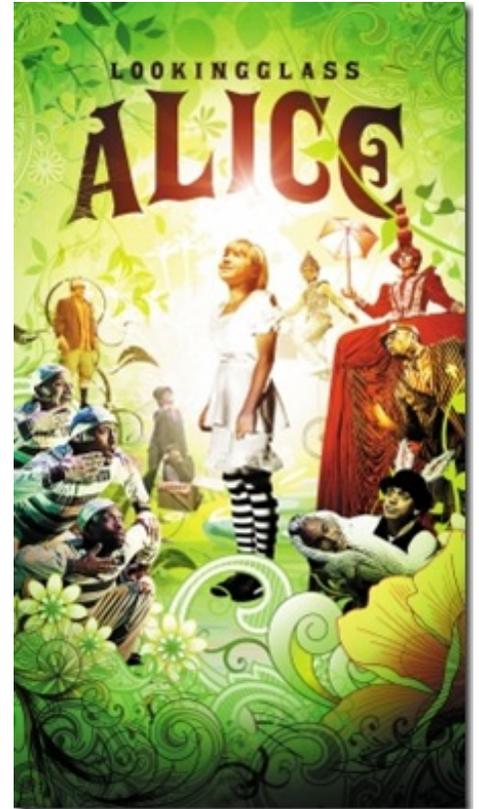
[Lookingglass Theatre](#) presents ***Lookingglass Alice***, the adaptation of the classic fairytales that also gave birth to the theatre company's name and mission – [Lewis Carroll](#)'s "Alice's Adventure in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass". Alice swallows a 'Drink Me' potion that sends her on a fantasy journey. She interacts with nonsensical characters like the Red Queen, Cheshire Cat, and Mad Hatter. Unlike most childhood fable storylines, Alice isn't looking to be rescued by a prince. She wants to experience life, meet interesting people/talking animals and become queen. *Lookingglass Alice* is the perfect illustration of independent thinking for the next generation. Lookingglass Theatre imagines Alice's adventures as a whimsical array of slapstick, aerial, hocus-pocus and dramatic spectacle.

The drama starts preshow. Upon entering the theatre, the room has been divided with a black curtain. In the middle of the curtain, it looks like a framed mirror. Upon inspection, it's determined to be actually a window to the audience on the other side. Each side experiences a preliminary scene with either Alice or Charles Dodgson aka Lewis Carroll. The emersion of experiences happens in a black silk rippling flourish. Adaptor and director [David Catlin](#) uses multiple visual techniques to give the story a deserved quirky manifestation. Performers switch characters. Picnic baskets become doors. The audience joins the action. It's all mirrors and illusions.

In the lead, [Lauren Hirte](#) (Alice) is petite. Hirte is believable as the precarious and defiant young girl standing up to the queen. Her childlike demeanor goes away as she balances a man on her knees and then tumbles into a series of stand-up somersaults. Knowing Hirte is actually not a kid helps when she goes aerial with some 'does your mother know what you're doing?' stunts.

The entire ensemble is in sync with comedy and physicality. [Molly Brennan](#) (Red Queen and others) cuts off Alice's "I mean to say" with a hilarious delivered, "I don't think it's mean to say-maybe rude. Off with her head." Even draped in various vibrant costumes, Brennan's facial expressions steal the comic focal point. Her interactions with [Kevin Douglas](#) (Mad Hatter and others) and [Anthony Fleming](#) (Cheshire Cat and Others) are synchronization fascination. Whether they are running across chairs or jumping on each other, their high jinx exploit the funny side of gymnastics.

Lookingglass Alice is Lookingglass Theatre's loving, frolicking tribute to a father they never met. How inspired that it should be actualized as a family-focused showcase! The production kicks up the familiar story with imagination realization and spikes it with comedy. I prescribe that all families should swallow the 'Drink Me' potion and go on the fantasy journey together!



Rating: ★★★½

Running Time: Ninety minutes with no intermission