

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE, AGAIN

University Theatre stages an adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for Generation Twilight

According to Dr. La Donna Forsgren, playwright and associate professor of theater arts at University of Oregon, there are three things newcomers should know when they sit down to enjoy her adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* at Hope Theatre:

1. Clap when you want.
 2. Laugh when something funny happens.
 3. Dance along if you like the music.
- (Oh, and there will be a bathroom break, too.)

These rules, which seem highly applicable to life in general, offer a hint about what Forsgren is up to in tweaking Lewis Carroll's beloved classic, in which a super smart young girl takes a formative plunge "down the rabbit hole" of her own fevered imagination.

Less an overhaul than an updating of *Alice*, Forsgren, who also directs, leaves Carroll's basic structure intact, opting instead to sprinkle tastefully sly cultural referents here and there in an attempt to tantalize a new generation raised on tweeting, twerking and *The Hunger Games*. Hence, Tweedledee (Matt Ober) and Tweedledum (Alex Metz) become a pair of pumped-up celebrity pomps, the



SUNIL HOMES, MARA TANDOWSKY AND LILY ANNE SMITH IN ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

White Rabbit (Andrew Nguyen) is a slave to technology and the foppish Hatter (Sunil Homes) is obsessed with *Twilight*.

There's much to enjoy in Forsgren's adaptation, which cops a pop-psychology approach to eke out the ways Alice's "curiouser and curiouser" adventure forces her to take control of her life (a funny line points out that, in the end, Alice becomes a "subject," rather than an "object," of her fate). The story-within-a-story of two modern kids, Allie (Maia Luer) and her older brother Derek (Ryan Burke), reading *Alice* as a bedtime story is a clever framing device, though toggling back and forth between

these mirroring narratives made the play feel a tad overlong.

Overall, Forsgren's *Alice* is a keen and kinetic reimagining of a story that has enthralled generations of kids and adults alike. The show is frantic and frolicsome, with plenty of sharp physical humor, witty updates and logical curlicues that do no damage to the abiding intelligence of Carroll's original. Who knew that Lady Gaga, Minecraft and gummy worms could pass so easily through the looking-glass? ■

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland runs through June 8 at University Theatre; \$14 general, \$12 seniors, students and UO faculty and staff.

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