

PERMISSION TO MISBEHAVE

A TRIP TO WONDERLAND ISN'T SO FAR AWAY WITH A NEW ADAPTATION OF THE CLASSIC TALE OF ALICE AND THE FAMILIAR COLLECTION OF COLOURFUL CHARACTERS HITTING ANDERSON GARDENS THIS WEEKEND. **CHRIS SILVINI** CAUGHT UP WITH EMMA SMITH (AKA ALICE) AND DIRECTOR **TERRI BRABON** TO FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR VERY PERSONAL TAKE ON THE FAMILIAR STORY





MAIN PHOTO: EMMA SMITH AS ALICE. ABOVE: SHAI REGAN AS MARCH HARE, PARIS WALSH AS DOOR MOUSE AND RACHEL NUTCHEY AS THE RABBIT. PICTURES: EVAN MORGAN

ALICE ON SCREEN

Alice and the wonderful world of Wonderland and all its quirky characters have been brought to life many times on screen. Here's a timeline of some of the most famous versions of the classic tale.

1903

The first screen version of Alice appeared way back in the beginning of the 1900s, when motion pictures were still a relatively new concept. It was a silent, eight-minute, black and white epic.

1915

Still in black and white, Alice and Co. were given more screen time with this 52-minute World War era fantasy feature. American actor Viola Savoy played the lead role at the age of 16.

1933

Costumes and sets became more elaborate for the early '30s reincarnation of the familiar tale. This version included a subplot about Humpty Dumpty who is perhaps the most terrifying-looking character to ever grace the big screen.

1951

The Disney classic is perhaps the most iconic, well-known, and beloved of all the trips into Wonderland. The vivid animation is a swirling mix of colour, the songs are impossible to forget, and the characters are as vibrant as ever.

1972

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland brought together some of the era's best comedy performers, including Michael Crawford (White Rabbit), Dudley Moore (Dormouse), and Peter Sellers (The March Hare).



1999

Wonderland came to TV land with a big-budget (for the '90s) two-parter starring some pretty big names. Child star Tina Majorino took the starring role while Whoopi Goldberg, Gene Wilder and Martin Short [above] were all perfectly cast as Cheshire cat, the White Rabbit, and The Mad Hatter respectively.



2010

Master of darkness Tim Burton gave the tale his spin bringing it into the 21st century with a 3D extravaganza. Aussie Mia Wasikowska was a slightly older (and a tad vanilla) Alice, while Johnny Depp stole the show as a seriously batty Mad Hatter.

When you're 11 years old, the world is full of people telling you to behave yourself.

Parents hassle you to clean your room, do your homework, or stopping hitting your brother; and teachers are full of dos and don'ts.

But young local actor Emma Smith is living every kid's dream. She's been given permission to misbehave and she couldn't be happier.

Smith's licence to act up is part of her first major starring role in Theatre iNQ's latest production – an adaptation of the Lewis Carroll classic children's book *Alice in Wonderland* being staged in Anderson Gardens.

Having performed with the company for eight years, Smith says the role comes with a lot more responsibility.

"It's really fun, but it's crazy sometimes. There are a lot more lines and I don't get a break. I just keep moving. It's so tiring sometimes," she said.

"I like playing Alice because she's weird and I like yelling a lot."

Putting on a show that's primarily for kids (it's showing during the day) is a change of pace for Theatre iNQ. The company's typically known for its highly popular Shakespeare *Under the Stars* or more adult fare like this year's spooky horror hit, *Frankenstein*. But for Smith, whose first show with the company was *Henry V*, it's a welcome change.

"I like this show because all the Shakespeare ones are scary and this one's exciting and fun," she said.

For the show's writer and director, Terri Brabon, being able to adapt the *Alice in Wonderland* story for the stage is the realisation of a lifelong dream.

It's a story that's been told many times on stage and screen, but Brabon is determined to show a different side to

the beloved tale. "*Alice in Wonderland* is my favourite children's book and I've always wanted to write my own version because I seem to see the story a bit differently to anyone else on the planet," she said.

"I never saw Alice how everybody else seems to. She's always portrayed as this soft, weak, polite, and wimpy girl with this high-pitched voice all the time.

"But when you read the book she is the most precocious young child. She argues with adults, she stamps her foot a lot, she's very demanding, she's fearless and curious; and none of this comes



I NEVER SAW ALICE HOW EVERYBODY ELSE SEEMS TO. SHE'S ALWAYS PORTRAYED AS THIS SOFT, WEAK, POLITE, AND WIMPY GIRL ... BUT WHEN YOU READ THE BOOK SHE IS THE MOST PRECOCIOUS YOUNG CHILD.

across in the ways I've seen her in the Disney film or even the Tim Burton one.

"It's always frustrated me because I've always thought that Alice is much stronger than that."

Brabon says with Smith reaching the right age for the character, it was finally time to bring this vision of Alice to life.

"Emma's performed with the company for such a long time. Even though she is 11, it's not like we have a kid in the room. She's such a part of the team. The actors know her so well and she knows them so well that there is such a shorthand with them," she said.

"She's perfectly cast because she's a

precocious little thing as well. Our Alice has a lot of sass. She's not always right, she often makes mistakes, but she stamps her foot a lot.

"She gets to be a bit naughty and what kid doesn't want to be encouraged to be naughty in front of adults."

But for Brabon, the story of Alice's adventures is about a lot more than just childhood mischief.

It's a coming-of-age story that she strongly identified with as she read the book for the first time.

It's no coincidence that it also has some parallels with Smith's own coming of age, both as an actor and a young woman.

"Maybe it was just the time that I read the book as a kid, but even as an adult I see it as a coming of age story of a little girl who is at that age that we all get to where we're about to grow up," Brabon said.

"We're learning big words and learning things at school so we come home and we think that we know everything, but we also like being little.

"We don't quite want the responsibility of being a grown-up.

"It's this story of this little girl who comes out the other end of this surreal world having experienced this amazing adventure that teaches her what she needs to learn.

"But she doesn't have to leave Wonderland. That's my life really.

"You don't leave your dreams behind just because you grow up. You just grow into a bigger version of yourself."

ALICE IN WONDERLAND IS ON AT ANDERSON GARDENS FROM JUNE 24 – JULY 9. TICKETS ARE SOLD OUT BUT MORE WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE SOON. ADD YOUR NAME TO THE WAITING LIST AT THEATREINQ.COM