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REVIEW: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

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☛ *Just because you're a 'grown up' doesn't mean you have to grow up.'*

That's the message coming through loud and clear in Theatre iNQ's latest sold out offering, *Alice: Through the Looking Glass*. Writer and Director Terri Brabon has once again managed to speak directly to audience's inner children with this fabulous adaptation of the Lewis Carroll classic.



(<https://www.the-ville.com.au/play-offers/the-australian-country-music-show/>).

The story picks up a few years after Alice Liddell returns from her adventures in Wonderland. Alice (Elyse Phelan) has grown into a cynical teenager who is much too mature to play games and indulge her imagination. But when she is visited by a younger version of herself (Hollie Sams), she is reminded that impossible things happen every day and that she needn't take life so seriously all the time. The two take the audience on a

captivating adventure in the Looking Glass world (yes, you can walk straight through the mirror yourself, if you're not too grown up to do so), discovering a plethora of zany characters along the way, warping the brain with some truly nonsensical riddles and getting your toes tapping with a soundtrack I am desperately hoping the cast will drop on Spotify.

Elyse Phelan is simply charming as 'Big' Alice, even when she is being a troublesome teenager at 15-and-a-half-*exactly*. Elyse has a wonderfully expressive face, terrific comedic timing and a magnetic stage presence that combine to make her performance nothing short of captivating. This is matched superbly by newcomer Hollie Sams as Alice's younger self. Hollie has demonstrated her own knack for well-timed story-telling, which is extremely important when so much of her performance needs to be in unison with Elyse's. Hollie has clearly committed to soaking up as much as possible from her Director and more-experienced cast mates and her joy for performing is highly infectious.

Many popular characters from Theatre iNQ's productions of *Alice in Wonderland* return in this show (although some of them appear in a slightly different form). Michael Gleeson and Ron Pulman are back as the perfect Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee – I'm not sure if they're quick-witted or dim-witted but they remain a strong crowd favourite. Arminelle Fleming has shifted form slightly from the evil Queen of Hearts to the rather passive-aggressive (though somehow loveable) Red Queen. Harlee Timms and Jacob McCarthy step wonderfully into the roles of the Mad Hatter and March Hare, bringing the perfect level of erraticism to their performances. And finally, the White Rabbit has morphed into the White King played brilliantly by Byron

Howells, who I'm sure will have a sore throat, sore jaw or both from the magnificent voice he's gifted the character.



The living flowers – Rita Neale, Gemma Shield and Emma Benson – make a mean bunch. IMAGE Chrissy Maguire

There are some exciting new characters in the mix too. Emma Benson, Gemma Shield and Rita Neale make a prickly trio as the living flowers. They're undoubtedly a mean bunch, but it's impossible not to love them when they whip out their instruments – some, entirely new inventions – and start twerking. Kellie Esling makes a fabulously eccentric White Queen, Keely Pronk is the dashing heroine every young girl will love and Brendan O'Connor will crack you up. Really. His fabulous appearance of Humpty Dumpty had one young audience member cackling maniacally from the scene's top to tail. As Alice's sisters, Edith and Lorina, Lara Pastega and Victoria Fowler did wonderfully to create a contrast between their characters and the rest, effectively setting 'our world' apart from

that in the Looking Glass.

Theatre iNQ has once again transformed Anderson Gardens into a world where anything can happen. As the audience travelled from performance space to performance space, it was wonderful to spot different little quirks and oddities hidden in the trees, and even more wonderful to spot adults getting swept up in the fun just as much as the kids. The sets, costumes and make-up were brilliant and – without giving too much away – the arrival of the Jabberwocky was side-splittingly inventive.

As expected, this season of *Alice: Through the Looking Glass* has already sold out, and deservedly so. If you were lucky to snap up tickets, I am sure you will smile from start to finish: the kids will absolutely love it and adults will find plenty of hidden gems in the clever script as well.

Theatre iNQ's sold out season of *Alice: Through the Looking Glass* runs until 14 July 2019. If you would like to be placed on the wait list, [click here](#).

(<https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?eid=497102&>)