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22 January 2016

*Wonder.Land*

Of the three shows we had the privilege of seeing in London, I will be honest and say that *Wonder.Land* was my least favorite. I thought the production was juvenile and I did not much enjoy the script. There were, however, a few aspects of the play that I did enjoy. I really liked the more technical aspects, but I also appreciated how they adapted a couple of the biggest concepts of the original story.

I have very high expectations from plays performed at the National Theatre, so I felt that *Wonder.Land* fell extremely short of these standards. It felt as though it was a production put on by a local, recreational theatre company. I was in a rewritten production of *A Christmas Carol* entitled *Scrooge...Jazzed Up Like the Dickens* and I felt that *Wonder.Land* was the equivalent. It felt as though someone took a classic story and tried to revamp it to be relevant and modern, but it was unsuccessful and poorly written. The storyline seemed unrealistic and not timeless. I suppose a computer game that is relatable to that in the play would be Sims, but I found it juvenile. I also took issue with the many loose ends, as well. The three girls that started off bullying Alice never faced any consequences for doing so. They simply decided Alice was cool for standing up for herself and chose to be nice to her. That hardly seems morally right for a play that seemed to focus heavily in the first act on the issue of bullying.

I suppose my fundamental issue with this adaptation is that it is not very relatable. I know that there are these virtual worlds where some people do choose to escape reality and create avatar versions of themselves to explore their desires, but I really do not think that that world is a large part of our population. For this reason, I feel as though not many people can empathize with the content of the play. I also feel as though it catered to children far more than it needed to. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, while it is a children's story, does not alienate adults and portray them as crazy or vindictive or unable to comprehend the life of a young teenager. It felt whiny. Although I appreciated most of the directorial choices because I thought the show was aesthetically pleasing to watch. They utilized the space on the stage well and I could hear all the dialogue. However, I could not understand many of the words that the teacher sang because her lyrics were so fast. I felt that she did not enunciate well enough, which is vital when an actor has to speak or sing quickly.

My favorite character, however, was the Cheshire Cat. He reminded me of the character Harold Zidler from *Moulin Rouge*, which is my favorite movie. To be honest, I felt as though most of the show, at least in regard to the virtual world, was like a Baz Lurhmann production, which was pretty cool. I liked how the Cheshire Cat's character was always wheeled around the stage somehow and even when the image of Cheshire Cat was projected on the screen and moved around, he followed in his chair. This leads me to the other redeeming quality of the play. I loved the special effects. I liked how Avatar Alice spent her first scene suspended in the air. I also really enjoyed how they utilized the screens to project images from cyberspace

for the audience to see. It was interesting to me that the Cheshire Cat character had both a human and an avatar. I suppose the human was supposed to be the creator of the website. I thought he portrayed the various forms that he took on the stage well and he did the Cheshire Cat justice.

There was one aspect of the script adaptation that I appreciated. I liked specifically how they chose to adapt the concept of the famous, "Who are you?" quote. I appreciated that it forced Alice to question who she truly is in a modern world filled with ways to hide from reality. This larger concept seems much more relevant to varying audiences and I felt like more of the characters could have gone through the same character development as Alice. She seemed to be the only one that changed at all from beginning to end. While I think that the script overall lacked, I thought it was filled with many funny lines. Many of the avatar characters were hilarious and that was a welcomed aspect to the show. In a play that is rather serious in subject matter, it was necessary to have these moments of comic relief. I just wished some of the characters in the "real world" could have had some of these moments, as well.

I suppose I just had rather high expectations for this production due to all the marketing and publicity that it was receiving. There was a whole interactive world outside the theatre doors, which could not have been cheap to install and maintain, so I really expected to be wowed and I just was not. I was underwhelmed. While I'm appreciative that I had the chance to see this production, I would not highly recommend it to any of my friends or family. There was so much potential in this new spin on a classic story and it just did not satiate my excitement and eagerness.