

Clarks Summit University presents ‘Alice in Wonderland’

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By Jessica Eddy - For Abington Journal



Alice enjoys a tea party with her toys just before making the fall in to wonderland in Clarks Summit University mainstage theatre production of Lewis Carroll’s classic tale “Alice in Wonderland.” - Jessica Eddy | For Abington Journal

CLARKS SUMMIT — A treat for the nostalgic soul came to the Abingtons this past weekend when the Clarks Summit University’s theatre department presented Lewis Carroll’s classic tale “Alice in Wonderland” on its main stage. Culminating the performances was a special sensory-friendly version on Sunday which allowed special needs community members to experience the show without fear of overstimulation from lights and sounds.

This production is the first of two shows in the theatre for young audiences’ genre the university is producing this

academic year, the second being C.S. Lewis’ beloved world war II era trip through the wardrobe in “The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.” This is the first time the university is specifically catering to younger audiences.

Director of the show and professor at CSU, Jonathan Strayer, noted that “for the first time ever, CSU is presenting Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). TYA isn’t merely children’s theatre, but is theatre crafted specifically for young audiences. It is meant to engage them creatively, intellectually and respectfully with sophisticated and imaginative storytelling.”

Strayer continued, saying, “Across our globe, the TYA community is creating some of the most incredible and engaging theatre that is being produced. CSU’s mission is to produce Christ-centered, career-ready graduates. So, by producing

excellent TYA productions for our community, we are continuing to do just that for our students, preparing them to enter an industry landscape that is serving a global community of young audiences with exciting, cutting edge artistry.”

The show was creatively delivered and was a delight to audience members of all ages. Alice’s impact on the Abingtons didn’t stop on the CSU main stage, however.

CSU student Naomi Muennich was cast as the lead in the show and noted how grateful she is to have had this theatrical experience as she prepares for her next steps in the industry. She then said, “I am also glad that we have the chance to focus on TYA for our theatrical season at CSU, so that more of the community of all ages will come and enjoy the productions that we put on.”

Leading up to the show, Muennich visited the Abington Community Library and teamed up with the Head of Youth Services Laura Gardoski to have a special story time with preschool-aged community members.

“A lot of what we do here is tying stories to other things, so the kids are getting exposure to books through things like song and even theatre,” Gardoski said. “It’s good for them to see the stories acted out to further instill that love of learning from a young age. If you start out loving books as a child, it will carry you through to adulthood.”

Muennich read to the young attendees from a Golden Books version of “Alice in Wonderland” and had a special question and answer time with them. She and Gardoski also sang songs, danced, did crafts and read other books to them during this special story time.

Of her time as Alice, Muennich said, “Many of my friends would say that I am a lot like Alice because I am young-at-heart and have the same wonder-filled perspective that she does. I enjoyed creating this character because it let out my inner child. Even though it was hard at some points, becoming Alice was a great experience.”



Josiah Hall as the mock turtle. - Ben Freda | For Abington Journal



Tunkhannock resident and Clarks Summit University student Mayling Ijomah plays the Queen of Hearts in the university's mainstage production of Lewis Carroll's classic tale "Alice in Wonderland." - Jessica Eddy | For Abington Journal



Alice, played by Clarks Summit University student Naomi Muennich, daydreams while audience members travel down the rabbit hole with her and the White Rabbit during the recent production of "Alice in Wonderland" at CSU. - Jessica Eddy | For Abington Journal



Liesel Gabriel, 4, of Clarks Summit, sits with her friends as she listens to "Alice in Wonderland" at the Abington Community Library on Oct. 30. - Jessica Eddy | For Abington Journal



Jonathan Strayer, director of “Alice in Wonderland” and professor at Clarks Summit University, finalizes lighting and sound cues during tech rehearsal a few days prior to opening night on the CSU mainstage. - - Jessica Eddy | For Abington Journal