

Alexandra Ballet

presents

# ALICE IN WONDERLAND



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# *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*

Enclosed is your teacher information handbook for *Alice in Wonderland*. Alexandra Ballet is very excited about this performance choreographed, staged and directed by Sergey Kozadyev and Susan O'Connell, internationally known choreographers and dancers. Mr. Kozadayev will perform the part of Lewis Carroll. Two other professional dancers will join him, Alexander Kozadayev as the Cheshire-Cat and Andrew Lay as the March Hare, along with the members of the Alexandra Ballet Company.

The performance will be held at **Washington University's Edison Theatre** on **Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am**. Through the generous **sponsorship of Emerson** students and teachers will be admitted free with a reservation.

A reservation form for tickets is enclosed. Please reserve your class's tickets by mailing, faxing, or e-mailing the **completed reservation form no later than February 1, 2003**. Seating is limited, so reserve your class's tickets early. If you want more information about the performance, please contact Amy Scheers at Alexandra Ballet, 314-469-6222, alexandra@alexandraballet.com.

The Emerson School Performance of Alice in Wonderland

The Alexandra Ballet is funded in part by  
Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis  
Regional Arts Commission, Saint Louis  
Missouri Arts Council

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# ***ALICE IN WONDERLAND***

## *A Dream within a Dream Ballet*

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most well known books ever written for children is *Alice in Wonderland*. It was written well over one hundred years ago in England yet remains remarkably popular all over the world. Just as fairy tales like Cinderella began as tales told by storytellers, so did *Alice in Wonderland* begin as a series of stories told by Lewis Carroll to Alice Liddell and her two sisters.

Eventually, just as the most well known fairy tales were written down and published in books, so did Lewis Carroll write down his stories into what we now know as *Alice in Wonderland*. It is imaginative, crazy, funny, clever, and wild all at the same time.

### **LEWIS CARROLL**

Lewis Carroll's real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. He spent most of his life at Oxford University, England, teaching mathematics. Apparently he wasn't a great teacher; his classes were known to be dull and boring. Although we know him best as the author of the Alice books, he also wrote books about mathematics.

Quite shy as an adult, he was most comfortable with children, especially little girls. Alice Liddell was his most famous child friend, but he had many throughout his life. He stuttered when nervous; perhaps

that is why he seems to have been more comfortable with children than adults.

### **THE CREATION OF ALICE IN WONDERLAND**

*Alice in Wonderland* began as a story told on a boat trip. Lewis Carroll and his friend, the Reverend Robinson Duckworth, took the three Liddell girls out on the Thames River on July 4, 1862. The three girls were Lorina, age thirteen, Alice, age ten, and Edith, age eight. Carroll wrote about the expedition in his diary and later added a note that it was then that he had told the story of Alice's adventures underground.

Alice so enjoyed the story that Carroll decided to write it down for her. (Remember that this was before typewriters or computers.) He finally presented her with Alice's *Adventures Underground* on November 26, 1864. The book was beautifully, handwritten with illustrations by Lewis Carroll, himself.

Before Carroll gave the book to Alice, he showed it to some friends who felt he should publish it. So he revised the book, changed parts, added parts, and found John Tenniel to do the illustrations. The book we know today, *Alice in Wonderland*, came out in 1865. It was a huge success.

## A UNIQUE POINT OF VIEW

*Alice in Wonderland* has a unique standing in the category of whimsical, nonsense literature. It was a marked contrast to the vast amount of strict, moralistic Victorian children's literature from that time in history. As a work of fiction, *Alice* lacks the conventional story line that we normally associate with a coherent, unified tale. In some ways Alice is a series of disconnected episodes. In fact, *Alice* is told in the form of a dream.

Because Carroll chose a dream as the structure for his story, he was free to make fun of and satirize the multitudes of standard Victorian didactic maxims in children's literature. *Alice* lacks a "morally good" heroine and meaning; instead of Carroll's making an ethical point about each of her adventures, *Alice* parodies the instructive, solemn verse, which filled Victorian children's books. Conventional "rationality" is replaced by the bizarre, fantastic irrationalities of a dream world.

Her adventures are not ordered; they are disordered. They are shifting and unpredictable, and there is always the menace of Gothic horror laced with the fantasies. Indeed, *Alice's* dream sometimes has the aspects of a nightmare. It can be seen as a path to overcoming fear, in order to find joy and laughter.

## VICTORIAN TIMES

The Victorian Era (1837-1901) was named for Queen Victoria of Britain who reigned from 1837 to 1901. Queen Victoria ascended to the throne when she was only 18 years of age. She was considered to be a modest and straightforward young Queen, who won the hearts of her subjects.

She and her husband, Albert, came to symbolize many virtues: a close-knit family life, a sense of public duty, integrity, and respectability. These beliefs and attitudes are often called "Victorian." In addition to Lewis Carroll there were other well-known authors from the Victorian Era who wrote about and for children. Among these were Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), and Conan Doyle (1859-1930), who created Sherlock Holmes in 1887.

- Middle School students can explore the differences and similarities between these authors' writings for children. Did the authors portray children in the same manner, or were there significant differences?
- Did you know that the word "caucus" means a meeting of a political party? Some say that Lewis Carroll wrote a political satire about the Victorian times. Many of the characters in the story break the "respectability" rules of that time. Could the Queen of Hearts be a characterization of Queen Victoria? How?

## FANTASY

Fantasy challenges our imaginations and asks us to create possibilities. Fantasies show us how to open doors, as Alice opened the door to *Wonderland*. Strange scenes, such as the Mad Tea Party, can raise questions about what is sanity and what is the significance of time. The chaos of nonsense can prompt one to laugh spontaneously and freely or to stiffen and look for rules to follow.

We learn about fantasy by hearing and reading fairy tales, through the imaginative visual and performing arts, and through creating our own representation of a fantasy. Also, we can learn about ourselves by exploring how we feel or would react to an unpredictable adventure.

As you read the book or watch the ballet of *Alice in Wonderland* consider these questions.

- Is it a fairy tale? Why?
- Which character did you like the best? Why?
- Select a character and say what the character represented in *Alice*.
- What feelings did you have when Alice went through the rabbit-hole? Why?
- Was one scene particularly funny or strange to you? Why?
- Was it difficult to follow the story line? Why?
- Have you had dreams that didn't make sense? Why do we dream?
- There are many ballets that tell the story of a fantasy adapted from literature. Can you name two? (Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella)

## POETRY

Carroll includes poetry in his fantasy of *Wonderland*. Have the students read this poem about the mouse and discuss the characteristics of Carroll's poem.

### *The Mouse's Long Tale*

"Fury said to a  
mouse, That he  
met in the  
house,  
"Let us  
both go to  
law: I will  
prosecute  
you. - Come  
I'll take no  
denial; We  
must have a  
trial: For  
really this  
morning I've  
nothing  
to do."  
Said the  
mouse to the  
cur, "Such  
a trial,  
dear Sir,  
With  
no jury  
or judge,  
would be  
wasting  
our  
breath."  
"I'll be  
judge, I'll  
be jury,"  
Said  
cunning  
old Fury:  
"I'll  
try the  
whole  
cause,  
and  
condemn  
you  
to  
death."

## **PRODUCTION OF A NEW BALLET**

*Alice in Wonderland*, a new ballet in two acts, is a magical interpretation of Lewis Carroll's fantasy in the art form of dance. The choreographers, Sergey Kozadayev and Susan O'Connell, combine video imaging, special sound effects, numerous scenery changes and the marvelous music of Sir Edward Elgar and Jacques Ibert to create a captivating production.

The sensational and varied dancing ranges from the classical pas de deux to a toe-tapping number or two from the White Rabbit. Not only have the choreographers created an enchanting ballet of *Alice in Wonderland*, they have successfully conveyed the themes, moods, and multiple meanings that are found by adults when they read *Alice*. Like the tale itself, it will captivate children and adults.

Salt Creek Ballet in Westmont, Illinois debuted this original, full-length ballet in April 2002. The Russian designer Maria Kozadayeva created sets and costumes that take one to a world of fantasy, chaos, and, sometimes, darkness. With this re-staging of *Alice* for its St. Louis premier, you will experience an exciting production, with many characters and a great deal of action.

## **MUSIC FOR THE BALLET**

*Alice in Wonderland* is choreographed to the music of Sir Edward Elgar and Jacques Ibert.

Jacques François Antoine Ibert (1890-1962), was a French composer, who wrote works for orchestra, ballet, chamber groups, voice, and films. Ibert was an ingenious and witty composer, revealing in his style the influence of French composers such as Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. His best-known composition is the orchestral suite *Escales*.

Elgar, Sir Edward William (1857-1934), was the first, Modern English composer to write important choral and orchestral music. The 1890 performance of his overture *Froissart* brought Elgar some recognition, but he did not become well known until 1899, when the Hungarian conductor Hans Richter performed Elgar's *Variations on an Original Theme* in London. That composition, better known as the *Enigma Variations* because the central theme is suggested but never overtly stated, is one of his most highly regarded and popular works.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE BALLET

### **Act One Prologue**

Alice's sister is giving Alice a history lesson. Alice is daydreaming about a world more interesting than the world of "grown-ups." As she falls in and out of sleep, she sees the White Rabbit.

### **The Rabbit Chase**

A thunderstorm begins as Alice chases the White Rabbit through the rabbit hole. Alice falls and enters the nonsensical world of *Wonderland*.

### **The Chamber of Doors**

Alice finishes her descent into a chamber of doors. While still chasing the White Rabbit she is offered a tart that causes her to shrink and grow until frustration compels her to cry a pool of tears.

### **The Pool of Tears**

Alice's tears mount to an ocean of mermaids and other sea creatures. They bring her to dry ground.

### **The Caucus Race**

Upon reaching dry ground, Alice is met by enthusiastic birds and animals ready for games. The race is to nowhere...everyone wins?

### **The Caterpillar**

Alice encounters a curious caterpillar. She is mesmerized by the metamorphosis, taking place before her very eyes.

### **The Butterflies**

Alice watches as the caterpillar changes into a beautiful butterfly. She is further enchanted by a meadow of butterflies dancing around her.

### **Pig and Pepper**

Alice enters the Duchess' Kitchen. She is caught up in the chaos and tries to save baby Pig from being "over-peppered."

### **Alice Meets the Cheshire Cat**

The Cheshire Cat finds Alice "dizzy" with exhaustion. He quickly appears and disappears, adding to the feel of unreality and mystery.

## **Act Two**

### **The Mad Hatter's Tea Party**

The Cheshire Cat delivers Alice to the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. She meets the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, and the Sleepy Dormouse. Their peculiar etiquette makes her long more and more for the "real" world, rules, and predictability.

### **A Dream Within A Dream**

Alice's sister dreams of entering the rabbit hole.

### **Epilogue**

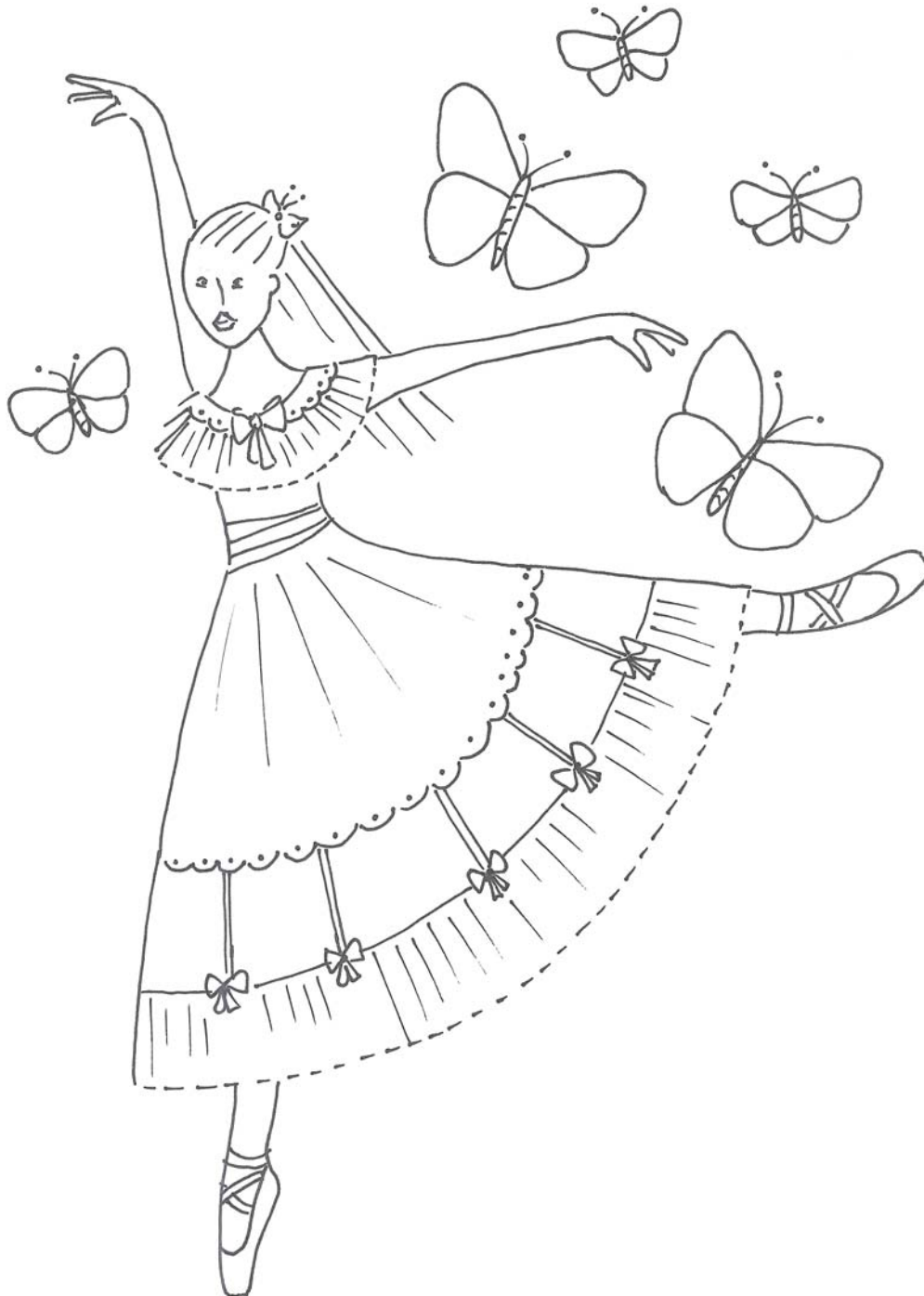
Alice dreams of herself as a princess and the Cheshire cat, as a prince. The Queen of Hearts and her Cards appear. Alice wakes from her "dream within a dream" at the threshold of a new adventure. Has Alice matured? Will she leave the land of nonsense?

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

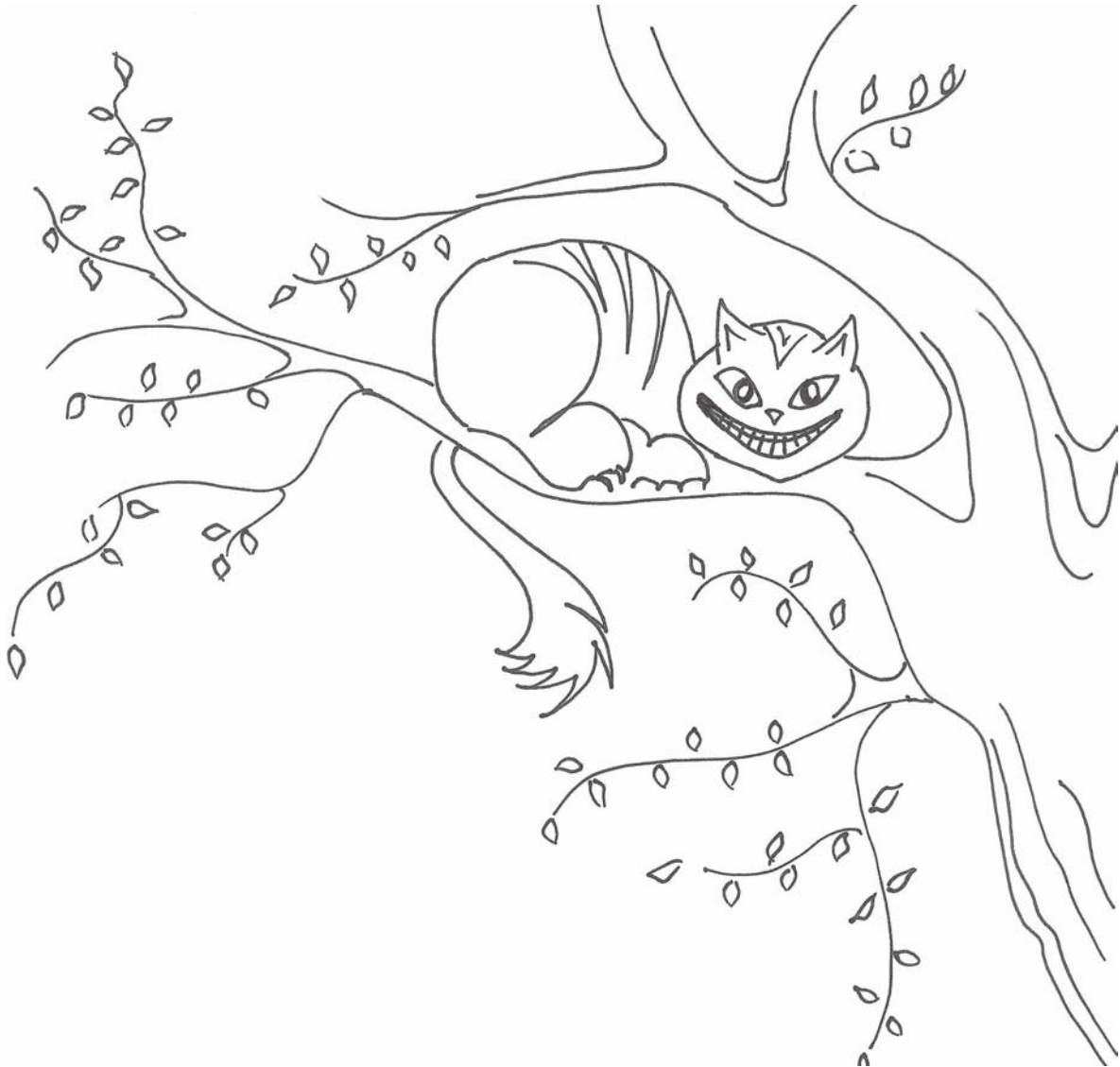
1. Ask each student to write a poem about Alice's adventure in one of the scenes. (Grades 3-8)
2. The class can divide into groups and make finger puppets or sock puppets that look like one of the characters. Each group can act out a scene from *Wonderland*. (Grades 3-4)
3. Color the pictures of Alice and the other characters that are enclosed in this booklet. Write a sentence on the page that describes something the student remembers about the character. (Grades 3-4)
4. Have each child draw one of the characters from the ballet, and tell the group why he/she picked that character. (Grades 3-5)
5. Use the Word List Puzzle to review the names of characters and important words from *Wonderland*. (Grades 5-6)
6. Have small groups of students research the use of dreams in literature. Can they find poems, children's stories, or other literature that refers to dreams? (Grades 7-8)
7. Web sites with lesson plans
  - Victorian era  
[www.victorianstation.com/queen.html](http://www.victorianstation.com/queen.html)
  - Alice in Wonderland-Grade 3  
[www.coreknowledge.org/CKproto2/resources/lessons/3.htm](http://www.coreknowledge.org/CKproto2/resources/lessons/3.htm)
  - Teach Poetry all grade levels  
[www.poetryteachers.com](http://www.poetryteachers.com)
  - Grade 6-8 lesson plan: Childhood Through the Looking-Glass  
[www.edsitement.neh.fed.us/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?ID=286](http://www.edsitement.neh.fed.us/view_lesson_plan.asp?ID=286)
  - Interactive Adventures of Alice  
[www.ruthannzaroff.com/wonderland/](http://www.ruthannzaroff.com/wonderland/)
  - Lewis Carroll As taught in K-12  
[www.lewiscarroll.org/k12.html](http://www.lewiscarroll.org/k12.html)



# Alice in Wonderland



# Cheshire Cat



Alice said,  
“Tell me, please, which way to go from  
here?”  
“That depends a good deal on where you  
want to get to,” said the Cat.

# Caterpillar



"Who are you? said the Caterpillar.  
Alice replied, "I know who I was when I got up this morning,  
but I think I must have changed several times since then."