

Thomas Marsh Yr8

Wonder.land is a unique and action-packed play which is an adaptation of Lewis Carrolls' *Alice in Wonderland* but in a modern-day and grey world. It uses projections and colours to give the idea of screens and phones which are a dominant theme in the show and forgettable, colourless and boring sets, clothes and people to represent the dullness of everyday life. The main character Ally - Lois Chimimba - lives in the city and has just moved to a new school after her parent's divorce; the colours and dullness showing how the world looks from her eyes and the colours of the screens being a contrast to this and a happy escape for her from the loneliness of her real life. The lighting and set designs are ambitious to say the least with the play relying on lighting to give the impression of screens and video-game characters and the sets needing to be perfect to display what the world looks like to Ally. Chimimba does an excellent job carrying the sassy humour and rebellious nature of her character and does an admirable but not perfect job at her many singing parts in the play.

Joshua Lacey and Carley Bawden do excellent jobs giving the impressions of video-game characters with jerky and staccato movements and - in Alice's case - using slightly gormless, repetitive and robotic tones to further sell the character to the audience which incidentally is slightly younger than teenager but is still quite broad and can be equally enjoyed by adults. Anna Francolini is unforgettable as the intimidating and hilarious Ms Manxome with one of her most memorable moments being her assembly to the school where she explains at length why she's always right and how she runs a dictatorship in the school. Hal Fowler is "fabulous!" as the Cheshire Cat and Caterpillar, using interactions with the audience to connect them further with the show itself. The ensemble and all actors are excellent with their synchronised set-moves and harmonic singing which really adds another dimension to the play.

The idea itself for the play is very different and could so easily have gone wrong and been a calamity but I think that they get just the right amount of craziness, humour, singing and emotion to carry the play and make it a respectable and impressive show. No acting stood out as awful and I don't believe any characters were cast wrong particularly. The overall acting and singing was decent enough to carry the storyline, not world-class: it also relied on a large budget and a lot of good lighting and stage-designs. But the acting of each individual was enough to explain to the audience who the character was, where they stood in the story and any other information to develop the plot. The acting wasn't perfect but it was definitely good enough especially as it is aimed at a younger age-group and it is a unique and strange idea for a play in the first place. An overall impressive performance, especially due to the difficult concept and ambitious idea.

4 Stars