

Alice in Wonderland

A Musical Dream Play

Walter Slaughter *Music*

Henry Savile Clarke *Book*

A Concert Performance

*presented by The Lewis Carroll Society
of North America & Bookmarks*



*Based on the books by
Lewis Carroll*

Musical Director

Michael Lauricella

Musical Producer

Matthew Demakos

Liesel Bond *Alice*

Regan Bisch *Soprano*

Nathan Sebens *Tenor*

Michael Lauricella *Baritone*

First on Fifth Baptist Church, 501 W. 5th St.

Friday, November 7, 2025, at 8 PM



From Lewis Carroll's point of view, the genesis of Alice in Wonderland: A Musical Dream Play was a letter he received from a librettist on August 28, 1886. The writer requested permission to stage the Alice books as an operetta. Five days later, Carroll gave his blessing but with one "essential condition. . . that I should have your written guarantee that, neither in the libretto nor in any of the stage business, shall any coarseness, or anything suggestive of coarseness, be admitted."

Alice in Wonderland opened on December 23, 1886, at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, a mere four months after the librettist first contacted Carroll. It was a success, playing 161 shows in London and in its provincial run. After a revival in 1888 and several other productions, the musical became a holiday fixture from 1900 to 1926, sometimes being performed simultaneously in two cities.

The Authors

Henry Savile Clarke (Librettist)

Carroll had to admit that he was unfamiliar with Henry Savile Clarke's name, despite the fact, as one writer put it, "Almost every year since 1873 he had something produced on the London stage: comedy, sensational drama, farce, satire, burlesque, adaptation or translations, sketches and operetta." Only one of those works, *An Adamless Eden!*, was a collaboration with *The Dream Play's* future composer. The two, however, did collaborate on a English adaptation of *Gillette de Narbonne*, a failed production the following year. Having passed away in 1893, Savile Clarke never witnessed his *Alice* as a holiday staple.

Walter Slaughter (Composer)

Walter Slaughter was a student of Georges Jacobi, the Alhambra Theatre's musical director, before becoming a musical director himself. Slaughter's success came largely after *Alice*, and with other librettists, though he did work with Clarke again on a stage version of Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* in 1890. In collaboration with the librettist Basil Hood, he had several triumphs, including *The Hansom Cabbie* (1895), which was considered his breakthrough. But one of his more enduring works, other than *Alice*, was an *Alice* imitation, *Bluebell in Fairyland: A Musical Dream Play*.

Lewis Carroll (Author)

Lewis Carroll was the author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), which became the plot of the first act, and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), which became the plot of the second act of the operetta. With ninety-five percent of the text, not including the songs, being taken from Carroll's two Alice books, one could argue that the author was also the co-librettist of the *Dream Play*. Carroll, a mathematics don and lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford, had many other interests, including logic, paradoxes, puzzles, theater, and photography. He practiced the latter for twenty-five years.

Our Production

Matthew Demakos (Score Editor and Musical Producer)

Matthew Demakos (he/him) has been writing on various topics relating to the life and works of Lewis Carroll for the last twenty-five years. He is overjoyed, however, to focus his energies on the forgotten operetta, and to bring out the latent musicologist within. He began entering the operetta's 1,500 handwritten pages (from the National Library of Australia) into his musical notation software several years ago. It is these scores which will be heard during the concert. Demakos has a habit of calling the *Dream Play* "the Carrollian's lost *Mikado*."

Michael Lauricella (Musical Director)

Michael Lauricella (he/him) is the drama and music director at Speas Global Elementary School where he continues to pursue his passion for writing and directing musicals for young actors. He moved to Winston-Salem three years ago from Wilmington where he served as director and musical director for several productions, including *Fun Home*, *Oliver*, *Mame*, *A Chorus Line*, and *A Christmas Carol*. He is also a performer, having toured with several tours through the US and internationally, and he enjoys sharing his love of the theatre with young performers.

The Singers

Liesel Bond (Alice)

Liesel Bond (she/her) is a fifth grader at Speas Global Elementary School who loves singing, acting, and playing soccer. She has appeared as Wendy in *Peter Pan* and the Royal Inventor in *The Nutcracker* at Speas Elementary. At Creative Drama Children's Theater, she has performed as Lucy in *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and Jasper in *101 Dalmatians*. Liesel enjoys spending time with friends and family and making people laugh. She would like to thank her teacher, Mr. Lauricella, for his support and encouragement in her theater journey.

Regan Bisch (Soprano)

Regan Bisch (she/her) has performed repertoire ranging from Mozart to Tchaikovsky and including opera, concerts, and musical theatre. She sang the title role of *Iołanta* for Opera Slavica, has performed concerts of Dohnanyi songs and American repertoire with the International Vocal Arts Institute, and has appeared as a soloist at the Toys R Us Children's Fund Gala in New York City with Martin Short. An alumna of Mannes College and the North Carolina School of the Arts, Ms. Bisch was asked to perform in the world premiere of the opera *Shadowlight*, composed by Larry Delinger for Marble City Opera. Recent career highlights include *Rose (At the Statue of Venus)* with Piedmont Opera, *Amalia (She Loves Me)* at the Willingham Theater, and the soprano soloist in Dvorak's *Requiem* with North Carolina Master Chorale.

Nathan Sebens (Tenor)

Nathan Sebens (he/him) is thrilled to be helping to tell a timeless story with a talented group of performers. Recently, he has performed locally with Little Theatre of Winston-Salem, Kernersville Little Theater, and Studio1. Professional credits include Orlando Shakespeare Theater, Children's TheatrE of Cincinnati, and Tecumseh! Outdoor Drama. During the day, Nathan is a very proud chorus teacher at Forbush High School.

Michael Lauricella (Baritone)

The singers will be joined as well by our musical director.



Songs from Wonderland

Sleep, Alice, Sleep (The Opening Chorus)

Fairies

Fairies find Alice under a tree in the forest, asleep, with a book in her hand. They promise to protect her with a tranquil and fluid (hence trustful) melody in 6/8 time. After their fruitless attempts to wake her, including making a fortissimo dissonant-chord ruckus, they dance and repeat their chorus.

How Doth the Little Crocodile

Alice

In order to discern if she remembers “all the things I used to know,” Alice attempts to sing “How Doth the Little Busy Bee.” By giving the duple lyrics a mismatched tuple meter, our composer suggests that something is slightly amiss.

Father William

Alice (with the Caterpillar)

After a grand introduction, Alice plays the diva, proudly singing a slow “patter song.” The refrain, not in the original, contains a melodic burst to allow her to shine. But our smug diva deflates back into Alice—all the words were wrong!

Speak Roughly

Duchess (with Alice, Cook, and Cheshire Cat)

In a quick *vivace*, the Duchess advises how to treat a sneezing baby. After her snappy verses, the others join her for an off-kilter, donkey-honking chorus, perfectly ridiculous, perfectly *unmelodic*, but perfectly *noteworthy*.

The Wondrous Cheshire Cat

Alice and Cheshire Cat

In song, Alice thanks the cat “For the things you’ve told to me,” and the cat in turn thanks Alice for praising her “active mind.” However, the charm is in the bouncy and memorable chorus where the two sing in close harmony.

So They Say

March Hare, Hatter, and Alice

The March Hare sings about the “mad” Hatter and the Hatter sings about the “queer” Hare. And Alice sings that they are *both* “mad.” Note how the frequent “So they say” interjections—short and catchy—propels the song along.

Beautiful Soup

Mock Turtle (with Alice and the Gryphon)

The melody is soaring, the accompaniment grand. And the subject: Soup! The mock-serio delivery is best portrayed in the chorus where the three stretch the syllables: “Soooooop of the eeeeevening / Beautiful, beautiful soup!”

The Lobster Quadrille

Gryphon (with Alice and the Mock Turtle)

Slaughter accentuates the verse’s pulsing one-note repetition by having the strings either play pizzicato or staccato. Alice and the Turtle join in on the chorus, all while supposedly dancing (in the stage version) an awfully detailed, and curious, quadrille.

The Voice of the Lobster

Alice

Alice’s undulating melody in 3/4 time is quite apt for the lobster’s sea. Notice how Alice extends the note on the word “shark,” pausing to exaggerate its fierceness. In the refrain, the flutes and clarinets add a memorable counterpoint.



Songs from Looking-Glass

Jabberwocky

The White Knight, Alice, and White King and Queen

The poem was intoned by the White Knight, a mere boy in the original. But later productions made changes, including giving the whole to the Hatter! We’ve decided to divide the verses between four characters. Listen for the beamish boy’s father’s “chortle” in the woodwinds.

Tweedledum and Tweedledee

Tweedledum and Tweedledee

Slaughter’s bizarre treatment of the rhyme quickly swings between an Eastern (Romani) and a Western (American Indian) minor mode, playing on the twins’ east-west (right-left) stance. He shifts the theme higher or lower for each twin.

The Oyster Ghosts

The First and Second Oyster

After the ghostly introduction, complete with shimmering strings, the first oyster enters with an amiable tune. Yet, in the chorus, the trombone and bassoon portray the Walrus and Carpenter in gastrointestinal agony! Let’s do it again!

Humpty Dumpty

Alice

The melody, plucked out by the strings, was attached to the tune only two years before *Looking-Glass* was published. Carroll’s last phrase “in his place again” was changed in the operetta to the more popular “together again.”

Humpty Dumpty's Fallen Down*Chorus*

In the original production, the song began with the children, singing in unison. They were soon joined by the men, singing an octave lower, and later by the woman for two-part harmony. Only by the last section do we get full-blown four-part harmony. Our version, obviously, is a variation.

The Lion and the Unicorn*Alice and Chorus*

After Slaughter's respectful treatment of the familiar rhyme, the "rat-a-plan" begins. In the original, it likely had a long crescendo, with perhaps some surprising lulls here and there (as here). All in all, it's short and fast. . . and if it doesn't become a bit obnoxious, our singers have not done their job.

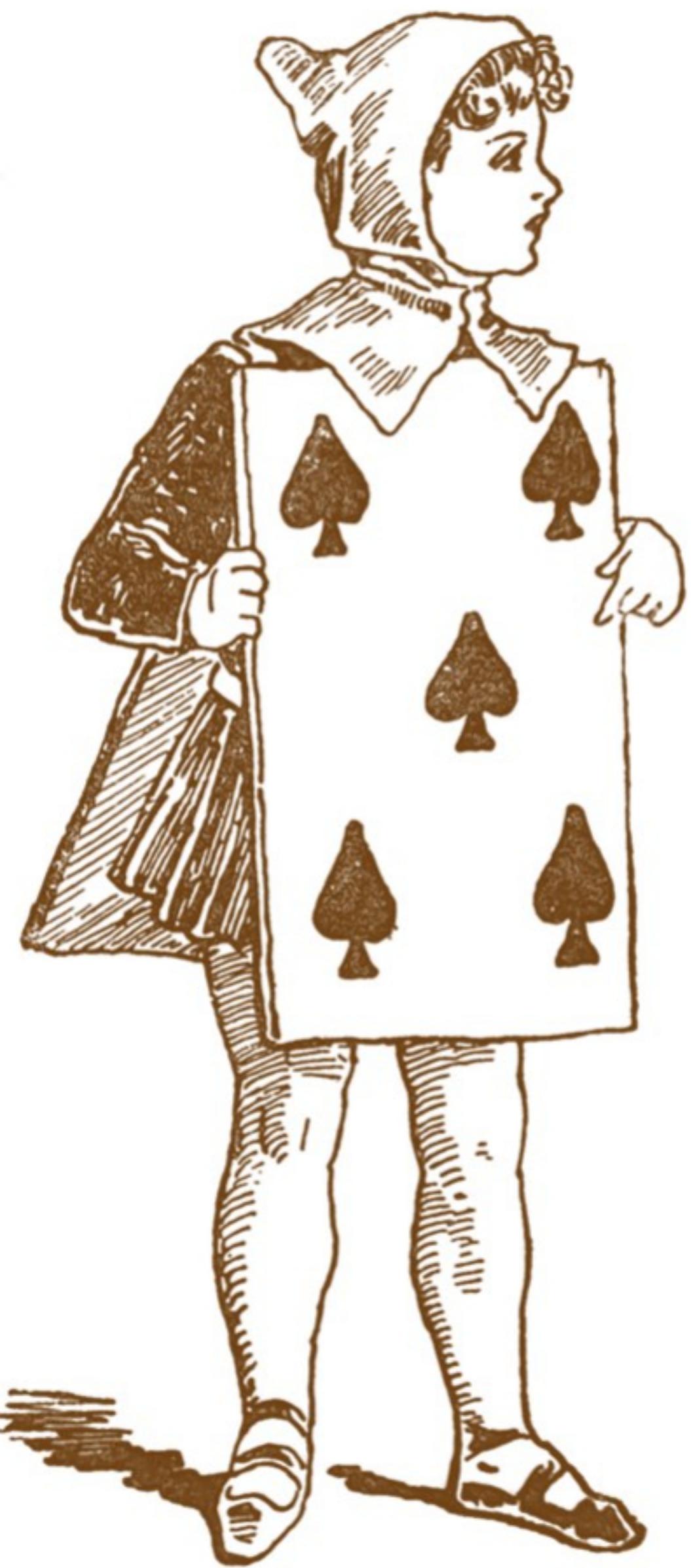
The Sound of Festal Trumpets*Chorus*

Joy incarnate. There is no better phrase to describe this upbeat tune. In the revival in 1888, it replaced the original's "To the Looking-Glass World," which had Carroll's own lyrics. So infectious the tune, we couldn't help ourselves—we added a repeat!

Alice's Health (Second Act Finale)*Chorus*

In a celebratory song, they drink to their QUEEN ALICE: "Gaily fill up." A gong bursts! The fairies return to dance and sing: "Wake! Alice! Wake!" Soon, Alice is found asleep as in the beginning. She wakes: "Oh, I've had such a curious dream!" An exquisite solo horn sounds before a grand crescendo. Curtain.





Sponsored by
The Lewis Carroll Society of North
America, Bookmarks, The Lovett
Foundation, and Matt Demakos

*All artwork by Lucien Besche,
from The Queen, January 8, 1887.*