

Oct 31st - Nov 7th 1992



THE QUESTORS THEATRE
S T U D I O

The Looking Glass Lesson

Water colour by Anne Lydia Bond, c.1877
based on an original photograph by Charles Dodgson c.1873



Based on 'The Lesson' by Eugene Ionesco
and the writings of Charles Dodgson/Lewis Carroll

Adapted and directed by Paul Ashby

The Questors Theatre Studio
Mattack Lane, Ealing, London W5 5BQ

In the looking-glass world, does Good become Evil?

Lewis Carroll was the pen-name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, born the eldest son of Charles Dodgson, a provincial Priest, in Cheshire in 1832

Brought up in a typical, almost idyllic, upper middle class Victorian household, young Charles followed in his Father's footsteps through Rugby Public School and on to Christ Church, Oxford, where, like his Father, he read Mathematics and Classics. Destined for Holy Orders (his Father later became an Archdeacon), Charles, upon graduating with a double first, immediately took up a lectureship in Mathematics at Christ Church, a post which he was to hold for nearly thirty years. The rules of the college dictated that, whilst there, whether as a student or lecturer, no man may marry, and hence must remain celibate; the rules also stated that all should take Holy Orders and Charles did study to this end for many years. He was finally ordained Deacon but, due to his stutter and horror of public speaking, he never took full Holy Orders. Later in life, however, having worked hard to partially overcome his stutter, he did preach on the odd occasion, sometimes standing in in case of illness and sometimes being invited to do so for special occasions.

Charles's main ambition was to write, this he did with gusto, producing hundreds of pamphlets, short stories, poems, magazines, mathematical papers and thousands upon thousands of letters, before destiny, and a young girl, changed his life forever

In 1862, at the age of thirty, Charles and a friend, the Reverend Duckworth, took Alice Liddell and her two sisters (all daughters of the Dean of Christ Church) on a rowing trip, as they had done many times before. As usual the girls persuaded the imaginative Mr Dodgson to tell them a story and 'Alice's Adventures Underground' was conceived. Unlike other occasions, at the end of the boat trip, Alice implored Dodgson to write down the story; this he did, finally presenting Alice with a self-illustrated manuscript about nine months later. The manuscript was shown to several people and eventually Dodgson was persuaded that the book could be published as a book and, much re-written and expanded and with new illustrations by the famous 'Punch' cartoonist Tenniel, 'Alice's Adventures In Wonderland' was published by Macmillans three years later. The sequel, 'Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There', was produced long afterwards but contained episodes and poems told on many a boat trip over the preceding years.

Always an eccentric man, Dodgson's interests in life were numerous and varied: photography (then in its infancy), magic and the occult, theatre, art, walking, logic, internal College politics, the railways, the lives of famous people, inventing games, puzzles, mathematical formulae, etc., and little girls.

Combining the first and last mentioned above, he photographed endless streams of 'child friends' in various garbs, sometimes simply in their own clothes, sometimes dressing them up and, as often as he could manage, in no clothes at all.

In the 1870's, he had a conservatory built on the roof of the College building, above his rooms, as a photographic studio, and his hobby reached it's height. But suddenly in 1880 he stopped all photography dead, never taking a single negative after that date, although he kept his equipment. It has been hypothesised that his penchant was turning into an obsession and that Oxford tongues were starting to wag.

In any event, all of his nude studies were destroyed by his family on his death, as specified in his will, ostensibly to protect the girls from embarrassment in later life should the photos be seen. The nearest visual evidence of his penchant is a water colour copy of one of his photo's, painted in 1877 by Anne Lydia Bond. Dodgson had sent one of his favourite nude studies to her to be coloured and, before returning it, she copied the photo; you can see it on the front cover of this programme and, in colour, on our posters.

'The Looking Glass Lesson' is adapted from The Lesson by Eugene Ionesco and Dodgson's letters, diaries, books and pamphlets, as well as from the two 'Alice' books. It is not intended to suggest that this is a true representation of the final years of Charles Dodgson; the production is a work of fiction, not documentary. But it is hoped that the juxtaposition of Carroll and Ionesco - the masters of nonsense and absurd respectively, and the Victorian setting - an age of smouldering sexual repression which finally erupts, will make for a stimulating evening of theatre.

PAUL ASHBY

Cast

Rev. Dodgson.....	Allan Morton
Alice.....	Rebecca Oates
Lewis Carroll.....	Peter Knight
Mary-Ann.....	Elaine Thatcher
Young Alice.....	Pippa Stark

Production

Directed and Designed by.....	Paul Ashby
Original Music by.....	Ian Amos
Lighting Designer and Operator.....	Guy Morrough
Sound Designer.....	Robin Thompson
Sound Operator.....	Jeanette Williams
Stage Manager.....	Tania Horwood
Deputy Stage Manager.....	Sam Klieger
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Irene Spence
	Shereen Kendler
Make Up by.....	Tan Elsley
	Stephanie Mitchell
Alice Dress Designed and Made by.....	Jayne Hilton

With thanks to Nigel Worsley, Jon Webster, Brin Parsonage and Russell Hill
and Greasepaint.