

Corbett Children's Theater heads down the rabbit hole

Troupe presents 'Alice in Wonderland' on April 14 through April 17

BY ROB CULLIVAN

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Sascha Fruehauf, one of three girls playing Alice in Corbett Children's Theater's "Alice in Wonderland," has to wonder sometimes if she's really awake.

"It's kind of like a dream," she says. "I watched the movies when I was a little girl, and now I'm playing her."

Fruehauf says she can get nervous from time to time when she realizes the spotlight's on her, but she's becoming adept at handling her jitters.

"I'm really excited since the show is coming closer," she says. "I think it's going to turn out good."

Fruehauf, 12, a seventh-grader at Corbett Middle School, is one of 55 cast members, ages 7 to 16, in the Disney musical, which debuts this Thursday, April 14, and runs through Sunday, April 17.

The play follows Alice's madcap adventures in Wonderland as she chases the White Rabbit, races the Dodo Bird, gets tied up with the Tweedles, raps with the bubble-blowing Caterpillar and beats the Queen of Hearts at her own game.

The fast-paced stage adaptation of "Alice" features updated dialogue and new arrangements of such classic Disney songs as "I'm Late," "The Un-birthday Song" and "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah."

Playing dress up

A handful of students are serving as the stage crew, adds Nadine Dody, a parent who oversees the costuming.

"We wanted to do a fun show and thought it would be creative," she says, noting the Corbett troupe is capitalizing on the popularity of last's year's 3D movie version of "Alice" starring Mia Wasikowska as Alice and Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter.

Dody says it was a challenge staying in budget to create the elaborate costumes "Alice" demands.

"It's taking a wedding dress and turning it into a cape for the Red Queen," she says to exemplify what she and other costume-makers had to do.

One of her helpers was Melanie Taffenson, 12, a sixth-grader at Corbett Charter School, who plays one of the Rock Lobsters. Taffenson helped make costumes for the Jellyfish and the Jabberwocky. She likes her role because "we get to be ridiculous."

"You're in the Queen of Hearts' navy, and I look like a sailor but you rock out a lot," she says.

Crazy, man, crazy

Zack Trani, 11, a sixth-grader at Corbett Middle School, plays the Mad Hatter, and sports wavy long hair that makes him look like a positively 19th-century Londoner when he wears his hat.

"He does things his way and doesn't care what other people think," Trani says of his character. "I like the choreography to the role, and I especially like the costume."



JIM CLARK / THE GRESHAM OUTLOOK
Sascha Fruehauf, center, is one of three actresses playing the role of Alice, and is shown here going down into the rabbit hole. The play begins its four-day run on Thursday at the Corbett Schools Multipurpose Building.

Meanwhile, Jenna Kerslake, 12, a sixth-grader at Corbett Middle School, shuns the spotlight and prefers working behind the scenes as a runner.

“I get sort of nervous in front of crowds,” she says, adding she enjoys helping the cast members remember when to go on stage.

“I think it’s really fun because I like to move around a lot and because my friends are helping out.”

Watching Alice

WHEN: 7 p.m. Thursday, April 14; 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Friday, April 15; 1 and 7 p.m. Saturday, April 16; 3 p.m. Sunday, April 17

WHERE: Corbett Schools Multipurpose Building, 35800 E. Historic Columbia River Highway.

COST: \$9 for adults, \$7 for students and seniors. Group rates available.

INFO: 503-695-2296, corbettchildrenstheater.com